Through Merrie England

By

F. L. Stevens

Illustrated by

Francis D. Bedford

Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green.

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THROUGH MERRIE ENGLAND

THE PAGEANTRY AND PASTIMES
OF THE VILLAGE AND THE TOWN

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A Tudor Courtship.

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PREFACE

I HEARTILY recommend the following books to those who wish to know more of this England of marvels and monsters, pageantry and play-acting, and, at the same time, gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to them : *Life in Shakespeare's England*, a delightful anthology, compiled by Professor J. D. Wilson ; *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country*, by Muriel St. Clare Byrne, M.A. ; *Shakespeare's England*, edited by Sir Walter Raleigh (two vols.) ; *Shakespeare's London*, by T. F. Ordish ; *Shakespeare's London*, by H. T. Stephenson ; Aitkin's *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth* ; Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes* ; Morley's *Bartholomew Fair* ; and the company of contemporary authors presided over by the Rev. William Harrison and including Stow, Stubbes, and Earle. The poetry and vigour of Merrie England are permanently enshrined in the pages of Shakespeare, of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Heywood and the other Elizabethan dramatists, and I must ask the reader's pardon for being tempted by Pepys to trespass on a later period when the laughter of the tavern was disappearing in face of the more solemn pleasures of the coffee house.

F. L. STEVENS.

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Headings and Tailpieces in black and white

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,
Of April, May, of June, and July flowers;
I sing of maypoles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal cakes. . . .
I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing
The court of Mab, and of the Fairy King.

ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1674).

THE HEART OF MERRIE ENGLAND

Where should this music be? i' th' air or th' earth?
It sounds no more.

SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest.*

MERRIE England! Where shall we search to discover its secret? The dream of Merrie England is a tapestried thing of colour and gaiety. There is laughter in the air. The ploughman salutes the lord of the manor as he rides by; across the fields adjoining the village comes the sound of the bell; its echoes return from the depths of the great forest. Even harsh winter is the occasion for happy singing:

When icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall . . .

Autolycus, the merry rogue of *The Winter's Tale*, is a creature of Merrie England. He is the embodiment of its spirit :

When daffodils begin to peer,
With heigh! the doxy over the dale,
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year ;
For the red blood reigns in the Winter's pale.

How shall we capture the poetry and laughter of Merrie England, and pinion them between the covers of a book ? Is it possible to catch so elusive a spirit ? It has something of Ariel, " Where the bee sucks, there suck I," and something of Falstaff, " Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale ? " Indeed, if we follow the phantom music does it not lead to the heart of Shakespeare's genius ?

Shakespeare is the magician of Merrie England, and it was left for him to trap this Ariel sprite. It is no use our muttering " Merrie England—Humbug! " just as Scrooge did of Christmas. If those times had not been more care-free, closer to an understanding of the mysterious music of the wind in the trees, and the birds in the fields, the laughter of comradeship, Shakespeare could not have been. It was

merely a happy accident that Shakespeare was born in the heart of " Merrie England." The greenwood of Warwickshire quickened his genius.

Like Autolycus, the spirit of Merrie England " haunts wakes, fairs, and bear-baitings " and sings with him :

> Jog on, jog on the footpath way
> And merrily hent the stile-a,
> A merry heart goes all the day,
> Your sad tires in a mile-a.

Let us turn back the clock for three hundred years and see for ourselves what this Arcadia was like. Life did not, of course, consist wholly of dancing on the village green, of pageantry and merry-making, of drinking and song. There were dark days, and evil times, and often the spectre of famine and pestilence swept over the land. It is our purpose here merely to throw into relief the robust pleasures and to draw a picture of the hardy men and women who had a lively genius for joy and colour and companionship. The age of Elizabeth, the age of Shakespeare, of Ben Jonson, the age of Drake and Byrd—the father of English music—this was the heart of Merrie England.

In early Feudal times the people of the village looked up to their local chief, and Lord of the Manor.

He presided over the working lives of the labourers. The court was held in the larger hall of his Manor House, and the villagers served him two or three days a week by working on his demesne. When William the Conqueror marched on London, he quickly realised that he would have to keep a shrewd watch over Englishmen, and the best way to do this was to divide it into shires and hundreds—feudal districts, traces of which still remain in our local administration to-day. Over these districts he appointed the nobles and warriors who had served him well. These in their turn apportioned some of their land to the lesser nobility, and these estates became the Manors.

The officers of the Lord of the Manor were the Steward, who presided over the Manor court, and safeguarded the interests of his lord; under him came the Bailiff, whose task was a particularly difficult one. The Bailiff was a most unpopular fellow, an overseer whose duty it was to keep the labourers and farm servants busy, and many records tell of the antagonism between the Bailiff and the villeins. The Reeve was the representative of the villagers themselves, and if we are to judge by Chaucer, was not less shrewd and capable than the Steward, and apparently no more loved than the

Bailiff, for, says Chaucer, of the Reeve of the *Canterbury Tales*: "They were adread of him as of the deth."

In the early Middle Ages, villages, which were surrounded by dense and almost impassable forests, consisted of the Church, the Manor House, and a few clustered hovels, forming the village street, but the age of Elizabeth was a period of great activity, of adventures in learning and on the high seas (Ben Jonson was lording it at the Mermaid, and the Spanish Armada was ready to set out on its ill-starred and inglorious voyage). Warwickshire's forests were so thick that travellers would halt to pray for protection from robbers before penetrating through the thickets. Indeed, so liberally wooded was Shakespeare's greenwood, that we are told a squirrel could leap from tree to tree the whole length of the county.

A picture of the Lord of the Manor of Queen Elizabeth's time is given in the writings of Sir Thomas Overbury, who described many characters of the countryside. This is his portrait of a country gentleman: "He speaks statutes and husbandry well enough to make his neighbours think him a wise man; he is well skilled in arithmetic or rates: and hath eloquence enough to save his twopence. His conversation amongst his tenants is desperate; but

amongst his equals full of doubt. His travel is seldom farther than the next market town, and his inquisition is about the price of corn: when he travelleth, he will go ten miles out of the way to a cousin's house of his to save charges; and rewards the servants by taking them by the hand when he departs."

In a famous passage Sir Thomas describes a "fair and happy milkmaid," and if he has drawn an idealistic picture, at least we must remember he was writing in the seventeenth century, when seventeenth-century people could read him. His charming and gallant portrait is in keeping with the traditions of his time. "The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of June, like a new-made hay-cock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her heart soft with pity: and when winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy wheel of fortune. She doth all things with so sweet a grace, it seems ignorance will not suffer her to do ill, being her mind is to do well. She bestows her year's wages at next fair; and in choosing her garments, counts no bravery in the world like decency.

"And Merrily hent the Stile-a."

The garden and bee-hive are all her physic and chirurgery, and she lives the longer for it."

The Manor House was in earlier days built of strong timber, and the English carpenters of Elizabethan times were the best in the world. Towards the end of the sixteenth century houses were being made of brick and stone.

An admirable picture of Elizabethan social life has been drawn by the Rev. William Harrison, who was a parson of Radwinter, in Essex, and later a Canon of Windsor. He wrote of the countryside as he saw it in 1577-1587. William Harrison, as befits a parson, did not hesitate to point a moral in his story, and every now and then interrupted his chronicle to deplore the laziness and degeneration of his time. But he has placed us all in his debt by his careful survey of the ways and customs of England.

Harrison was engaged for a long time in fashioning a " chronologie." " In times past," he writes, " men were contented to dwell in houses built of sallow, willow, plum tree, hardbeam, and elm, so that the use of oak was in manner dedicated wholly unto churches, religious houses, princes' palaces, noblemen's lodgings, and navigation ; but now all these are rejected, and nothing but oak any whit regarded. And yet see the change! For, when our houses were

built of willow, then had we oaken men ; but, now that our houses are come to be made of oak, our men are not only become willow, but a great many through Persian delicacy crept in among us altogether of straw : which is a sore alteration."

Harrison was loud in his praise of the craftsmen of his time who excelled the best of earlier years. They were cunning in the use of oak and the creation of new devices. Most of the buildings in the cities and towns were of wood, and very few of stone, though, we are told, it was as cheap to build with one as the other. " In old time," says Harrison, " the houses of the Britons were slightly set up with a few posts and many raddles, with stable and all offices under one roof."

There are many Elizabethan farm houses and cottages still in existence, and we can visualise the Elizabethan village fairly accurately. In the counties of Cheshire, Surrey and Buckinghamshire, for example, and in the remote valleys of the countryside, beautiful " magpie " houses, curiously carved, are eloquent reminders of the leisure and craft of those days.

In many districts there were not more than four, six or nine inches between the timber uprights of the cottages ; on these uprights were fastened splints or

raddles, and over them was spread thick clay. There were, of course, mere hutments for the poorer people with thatched roof and earth well trampled down for floor. A Spanish visitor wrote, " These English have their houses made of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonly so well as the king."

The country houses were covered with tiles, or thatched unless a slate quarry were near. The clay taken from the neighbourhood had " local colour " in very truth, and this gave to the cottages that harmony with the landscape which many architects of our time have so disastrously ignored.

William Harrison gives us an excellent introduction to the homes of England. " In plastering likewise of our fairest houses over our heads, we use to lay first a line or two of white mortar, tempered with hair, upon laths, which are nailed one by another (or sometimes upon reed or wickers more dangerous for fire, and made fast here and there saplaths for falling down), and finally cover all with the aforesaid plaster, which, beside the delectable whiteness of the stuff itself, is laid on so even and smoothly as nothing in my judgment can be done with more exactness. The walls of our houses on the inner sides in like sort be either hanged with tapestry, arras work, or painted cloths, wherein either divers histories, or

herbs, beasts, knots, and such like are stained, or else they are ceiled with oak of our own, or wainscot brought hither out of the east countries, whereby the rooms are not a little commended, made warm, and much more close than otherwise they would be. As for stoves, we have not hitherto used them greatly, yet do they now begin to be made in divers houses of the gentry and wealthy citizens, who build them not to work and feed in, as in Germany and elsewhere, but now and then to sweat in, as occasion and need shall require it."

Lattice windows were not uncommon, and about this time glass from Burgundy, Normandy and Flanders was easy to obtain. Such was the brilliant craftsmanship of the builders—for we must remember the age of Elizabeth was the age of stately mansions—that even Harrison admired their skill. " So magnificent and stately as the basest house of a baron doth often match in our days with some honours of princes in old time. So that, if ever curious building did flourish in England, it is in these our years wherein our workmen excel."

In the houses of the wealthy there were rich tapestries, silver vessels and plate worth, in those days, £1,000 or £2,000, and even farmers had learned to garnish their cottages with plate, their " joined

beds " with tapestries and silk hangings, and their " tables with carpets and fine napery whereby the wealth of our country doth infinitely appear." Except in the manor houses, monasteries, and houses of the great, England's houses had been built without chimneys. It had been the custom to make fires for cooking against an oaken screen, or in the middle of the floor, but in Elizabethan times chimneys became more and more common.

We know from the pictures of the time of Queen Elizabeth, and those of Elizabeth herself, how monstrously upholstered, ruffed and bolstered the fine ladies appeared. In dress, as in everything else, it was a period of experiment and self-expression. The ruffs, so conspicuous in the portraits of Elizabeth, were supported by wires, until, in 1564, Mistress Dinghen arrived in England from Holland with the momentous laundry secret of starching. Dekker, the author of *A Shoemaker's Holiday*, a lively picture of a London tradesman's life, writing of ruffs, said that they had " more arches for pride to row under, than can stand under five London bridges."

As we know from Shakespeare's many jests at their expense, there were many fops abroad, who dressed in the most extravagant and foolish taste. While the ploughman perforce must rest content

with homely doublet and hose, some of the fine guests of the Lord of the Manor would be richly caparisoned in embroidered waistcoats, padded silken doublets trimmed with lace of gold, and wearing slashed shoes of coloured leather, and silk stockings. Writing with Puritanic indignation at the excesses in dress of those who lived in the year 1574, Camden said : " In these dayes had very great excesse of Apparell spred it selfe all over England, and the habite of our own Countrey, through a peculiar Vice incident to our apish Nation, grew into such contempt, that men by their new-fashioned Garments, and apparell too gawdy, discovered a certaine deformitie and insolencie of minde, whilest they jetted up and downe in theyr Silkes, glittering with gold and silver eyther imbroydered or laced."

It was, however, a vigorous, manly and exuberant age. The people of England were not cramped by the fetters of tradition. They were awakening to wonder, aware of the fun of living. The secret of Merrie England may have lain in the virile outdoor tasks associated with the plough. The peasant could sing at his work. The craftsman had sufficient leisure to picture his fancies and his dreams in carving and express something of himself in fashioning his church or his master's mansion. The native genius of good

cheer and tolerance was not injured by the demands of the machine. The Elizabethan caught the echo of the traveller's tales and his fancy was offered immense scope. Boundaries, which in our time are narrowed by the advance of mechanical transport, appeared to the Elizabethan shadowy and infinite. The world was his universe. He was glad to be alive. This joy in living was expressed by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*; in Beaumont and Fletcher's lively tale of the London apprentice, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; in the madrigal; in the spontaneous overflowing of high spirits; in the pageantry and pastime, the song and laughter on the village green.

THE VILLAGE GREEN

Wash, dress, be brief in praying ;
Few beads are best, when once we go a-Maying.

HERRICK.

THE village green on May the first was the high festival of Merrie England. May-day's pageantry was a happy ritual, eloquent proof of the people's devotion to the gods of the greenwood. The young villagers rose in the early morning of May-day, when the first shafts of dawn had shone upon " the dew-bespangling herb and tree." With great merriment, and to the sound of music, they trooped into the neighbouring woods, where they gathered

branches of the sweet smelling May blossoms. On their return to the village, they decorated the cottage doors and windows " With hawthorn buds, and sweet eglantine."

Herrick, who has a good claim to the title of minstrel of Merrie England, has translated the beauty and laughter of Maying into exquisite verse :

Come, my Corinna, come ; and, comming, marke
How each field turns a street, eat street a parke
Made green, and trimm'd with trees ; see how
Devotion gives each house a bough,
Or branch ; each porch, each doore, ere this,
An arke, a tabernacle is,
Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove ;
As if here were those cooler shades of love.
Can such delights be in the street,
And open fields, and we not see't ?
Come, we'll abroad, and let's obey
The proclamation made for May :
And sin no more, as we have done, by staying.
But, my Corinna, come, let's goe a-Maying.

There's not a budding boy or girle, this day,
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
A deale of youth, ere this, is come
Back, and with white-thorn laden home
Some have dispatcht their cakes and creame
Before that we have left to dreame.

This revelry preceded the chief event of the day : the entry of the Maypole and the dancing around it.

The spoil-sports lamented this annual festival to the spirit of the flowers and the woodland. The Puritans grew sour at the thought of the Maypole, which in their imagination was an idol to be cast down. To them it was a symbol of degeneration, and it is remarkable that the country escaped a "Battle of the Maypole," so indignant were some at the thought of the May-day pageantry. Stubbes, who was one of the most active pamphleteers of the Puritans, in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, singled out May-day for attack, and in his spleen actually gave us the most graphic pictures we have of the celebrations. "Against May, Whitsunday, or some other time of the year, every parish, town and village assemble themselves together, both men, women and children, old and young, even all indifferently; and either going all together or dividing themselves into companies, they go some to the woods and groves, some to the hills and mountains, some to one place and some to another, where they spend all the night in pleasant pastimes; and in the morning they return, bringing with them birch boughs and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withal. And no marvel, for there is a great lord present amongst them, as superintendent and lord over their pastimes and sports, namely Sathan, prince of hell. But their

chiefest jewel they bring from thence is their May-pole, which they bring home with great veneration, as thus. They have twenty or forty yoke of oxen, every ox having a sweet nose-gay of flowers placed on the tip of his horns; and these oxen draw home this May-pole (this stinking idol, rather) which is covered all over with flowers and herbs, bound round about with strings from the top to the bottom, and some-time painted with variable colours, with two or three hundred men, women and children following it with great devotion. And thus being reared up with handkerchiefs and flags streaming on the top, they straw the ground about, bind green boughs about it, set up summer-halls, bowers, and arbours hard by it; and then they fall to banquet and feast, to leap and dance about it, as the heathen people did at the dedication of their idols, whereof this is a perfect pattern, or rather the thing itself."

Poor Stubbes's melancholy enables us to catch an echo of the laughter of those days, for his gloomy fears serve to throw into relief the gaiety of the people, who preferred to sing with Herrick:

> The May-pole is up,
> Now give me the cup;
> I'll drink to the garlands around it;

But first unto those
Whose hands did compose
The glory of flowers that crown'd it.

There was a time when the May-day festival was accompanied by a pageant, which in colour and gaiety was an admirable tribute to the native poetry of our forefathers. A typical scene performed by the servants of a mediæval baron has been well described by Strutt, the historian of the pastimes of England, and through his vivid pages we can recreate the scene, and take part in the festivities as silent witnesses.

The village green was fenced off to make an arena for the players. In a pavilion erected at a favourable point the Baron and his guests watched the pageant. "Six young men first entered the square, clothed in jerkins of leather, with axes upon their shoulders like woodmen, and their heads bound with large garlands of ivy-leaves, intertwined with sprigs of hawthorn." They were followed by six village girls in blue, wearing crowns of primroses, and leading "a fine, sleek cow," gaily beribboned, with its horns gold-tipped. Six foresters in green tunics, hoods and hose, carrying bugle horns, then marched into the arena, making brave music. The Baron's chief falconer, dressed in a bright, grass-green tunic,

trimmed with gold, with hood and hose of blue and white, represented Robin Hood. He was crowned with rosebuds, carried a bow bent in his hand, and a sheaf of arrows at his girdle. It was a brilliant scene. Robin Hood's bugle horn was of light blue, embroidered with silver, and the hilts of his sword and dagger were gold embossed. On his right hand was the Baron's page as Little John, and on his left the butler, as Will Stukeley.

Ten attendants of the outlaw King, also dressed in green, with bent bows in their hands and arrows at their girdle, then followed in this greenwood pageant. Maid Marion, the Queen of the May, was preceded by two village girls in orange-tinted kirtles, who strewed the ground with flowers as they walked. Maid Marion's white linen gown was fringed with silver, and draped with a network of gold, surmounted by a garland of silver ornamented with blue violets. Her long, brown hair was curled and hung about her shoulders. She and her attendants carried flower garlands upon their heads. Then there swaggered on to the green a handsome, mock-pious fellow. This was Samson, the Smith, as Friar Tuck, carrying a huge quarter-staff on his shoulder. His comrade in jest was Morris, the mole-taker, who represented Much, the miller's son. He made much

play with a long pole with an inflated bladder attached to one end. Chief of them all, the Maypole, was drawn by eight oxen, decorated with scarves and ribbons and flowers, and their horns gold-tipped. Finally came the hobby-horse and the dragon.

As the Maypole was lowered to the green the foresters sounded their horns, and the villagers shouted and cheered, until their cries caused the birds to circle above them and so join in the May-day fun. The Maypole was decorated with ribbons and flowers by the villagers, who renewed their shouts of glee when the woodmen and milkmaids danced about it, and the Baron's chief minstrel played on the bagpipes, accompanied by the pipe and tabor.

Gregory, the Jester, playing the hobby-horse, imitated the pranks of a restive horse ; the Baron's ranger, with much hissing and shaking of wings, played the part of the dragon, and Morris, the mole-taker, with small bells on his knees and elbows, performed a grotesque dance between the dragon and the hobby-horse. As he came near to the " gaping rustics," he slyly threw a handful of meal into their faces, or cracked them on the head with the bladder. Gregory and his fellow actors at last exhausted, the archers tried their skill at the target on the green, and Robin Hood and Will Stukeley were supreme, just

as they would have been had they not been acting a part. Both of them lodged an arrow in the centre circle of gold. The arrows were so near to each other that the winner could not readily be decided. In the end Robin conquered, and won his prize, a crown of laurel, after which the villagers themselves streamed on to the green and danced around the Maypole with great liveliness until the sun sank behind the canopy of trees, and Morris, the mole-taker, homeward bound, wondered if, perchance, he had banged too heavily with the bladder.

Robin Hood was the people's hero of Merrie England. He was the chivalrous knight of the forest, the friend of the poor, and held as great a place in the affections of those of his day as legend has preserved for him in ours. We can realise how Robin Hood was venerated by the people when we read this humorous story of good Bishop Latimer, who, expecting a crowded congregation at the village church, found the door locked and his flock scattered. The bishop told the story in a sermon he preached before Edward VI in 1549: "I came once myself to a place, riding on a journey homeward from London, and I sent word overnight into the town that I would preach there in the morning because it was holy day, and methought it was an holy day's work. The church

stood in my way, and I took my horse and my company, and went thither. I thought I should have found a great company in the church, and when I came there the church door was fast locked.

" I tarried there half an hour and more, at last the key was found, and one of the parish comes to me and says : ' Sir, this is a busy day with us, we cannot hear you, it is Robin Hood's day. The parish are gone abroad to gather for Robin Hood. I pray you let them not.' I was fain there to give place to Robin Hood ; I thought my rochet should have been regarded, though I were not, but it would not serve, it was fain to give place to Robin Hood's men. . . ."

The Maypole, however, became the subject of attack by the frenzied zeal of the " reformers," and in 1633 King Charles I issued a warrant : " after the end of Divine Service, his good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged from any lawfull recreation : such as dancing, either men or women ; archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any other such harmless recreations : nor from having of May Games, Whitson Ales, and Morris Dances, and the setting up of Maypoles, and other sports therewith used ; so as the same be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or neglect of Divine Service. . . . But with all his Majesty doth hereby account still

Whitsun Ales and Morris Dances.

B. 22.

as prohibited, all unlawful games to be used on Sundays only, as bear and bull-baitings, interludes, and, at all times in the meaner sort of people by law prohibited, bowling."

A year after King Charles I made himself the champion of the Maypole, a poem appeared which showed what a hallowed place the Maypole had in the affections of the people:

Stay, quoth my Muse, and here behold a Signe
Of harmlesse mirth and honest neighbourhood,
Where all the parish did in one combine
To mount the rod of peace, and none withstood:
When no capritious constables disturb them,
Nor justice of the peace did seeke to curb them,
Nor peevish puritan, in rayling sort,
Nor over-wise church-warden, spoyl'd the sport.

Happy the age, and harmless were the dayes
(For then true love and amity was found),
When every village did a May Pole raise,
And Whitson-ales and May-Games did abound:
And all the lusty yonkers, in a rout,
With merry lasses daunc'd the rod about,
Then Friendship to their banquets bid the guests,
And poore men far'd the better for their feasts.

The lords of castles, mannors, townes, and towers,
Rejoic'd when they beheld the farmers flourish,
And would come downe unto the summer-bowers
To see the country-gallants dance the Morrice.

However, the "peevish Puritans" got rid of Charles I, and with him the Maypole. In 1644, "because the prophanation of the Lord's Day hath been heretofore greatly occasioned by May Poles (a heathenish vanity, generally abused to superstition and wickedness), the Lords and Commons do further order and ordain, that all and singular May Poles, that are or shall be erected, shall be taken down and removed by the constables, borsholders, tything men, petty constables, and churchwardens of the parishes, when the same be; and that no May Pole shall be hereafter set up, erected, or suffered to be within this kingdom of England or dominion of Wales. The said officers to be fined five shillings weekly till the said May Pole be taken downe."

With the restoration of Charles II came the return of the Maypole, and the fiddlers, who had been "almost starved for want of worke" played again their lively tunes. The crown of the year was again saluted. One of the glories of the May-day celebrations was the Morris Dance, whose innocent charm and grace have been revived with such enthusiasm in our own time.

In Shakespeare's time the Morris Dance was a rollicking affair, with much more buffoonery than we, in our time, are accustomed to see. Its origin in

this country is somewhat obscure. It may have been introduced by John of Gaunt from Spain in the time of Edward III, but it was probably borrowed from the French or the Flemings. One authority tells us that it was a development of the Morisco Dance, or Spanish Fandango. What is certain is that in the time of Henry VIII it was an essential part of all village festivities, in which it was danced as a rule by five men and a boy dressed in a woman's clothes. He was " Maid Marion." There were two musicians, and sometimes one more impressively dressed than the others as " foreman." The dancers carried bells on their legs and arms, and these were tuned to different notes to make a harmonious jingle. " Maid Marion " carried a very ornamental head-dress with gay trimmings. The chief players, with Maid Marion, were Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, the Fool and the Hobby Horse. In later times it was danced by twenty or more. One chronicler, writing in 1589, says: " Martin himself is Maid Marion, trimly dressed up in a cast gown, and a kercher of Dame Lawson's, his face handsomely muffled with a diaper-napkin to cover his beard." Robin Hood, as we know, was King of the May, but—" Chiefest of them all the foole, Played with a ladle and a toole. . . ." The ladle was the collecting box of the Morris dancers,

and was sometimes carried in the mouth of the hobby horse, of which we shall have something to say anon.

In a window of a house in Betley, Staffordshire, there is, or was, a painted glass window, showing what was thought to be the most curious, as well as the oldest, representation of Morris dancers. Tollet, the owner of the house, described the jester with the bauble or fool's stick in his hand, and his coxcomb hood with ass's ears and a bell at his neck.

A contemporary poet gives us a picture of the Morris fool :

> My sleeves are like some Morris dancing fellow,
> My stockings, idiot like, red, green, and yellow.

Friar Tuck appeared in the window in " full clerical tonsure with a chaplet of white and red beads in his hand : and, expressive of his professed humility his eyes are cast upon the ground. His corded girdle and his russet habit denote him to be of the Franciscan order, or one of the Grey Friars. His stockings are red, and his red girdle is ornamented with a golden twist and a golden tassel." He disappeared from the list of Morris dancers in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

The cleverest of them all, and one who resembled a modern circus clown, was the hobby-horse. He

who played this part was a skilful fellow, something of a juggler. His horse was made of paste-board, which according to Tollet was fretted with gold had a golden bit, and a purple bridle. The player was enclosed in this frolicsome paste-board horse, and he performed many dexterous tricks to the great joy of the crowds. One of his famous displays was the threading of a needle, and an illusion whereby it appeared that he carried daggers in his cheek. He was a splendid mimic in imitating the neighing of a horse, and was perhaps the favourite of all. A dramatist of 1636 puts these words into the mouth of one of his characters : " Let the Major play the Hobby Horse among his brethren, and he will ; I hope our towne ladds cannot want a Hobby Horse. Have I practic'd my reines, my carree'res, my pranckers, my ambles, my false trotts, my smooth ambles, and Canterbury paces, and shall Master Major put me besides the Hobby Horse ? Have I borrow'd the fore horse-bells, his plumes, and braveries, nay, had his mane new shorne and frizl'd, and shall the Major put me besides the Hobby Horse ? Let him hobby-horse at home, and he will. Am I not going to buy ribbons and toyes of sweet Ursula for the *Marian,* and shall I not play the Hobby Horse ? "

The Master of Ceremonies on this occasion was the Lord of Misrule, and Stubbes, in his mournful spleen, has given us a vigorous portrait of this mischievous fellow: "First, all the wild-heads of the parish, conventing together, choose them a Grand Captain (of all mischief) whom they ennoble with the title of my Lord of Misrule, and him they crown with great solemnity, and adopt for their king. This king anointed, chooseth forth twenty, forty, threescore or a hundred lusty guts, like to himself, to wait upon his lordly majesty, and to guard his noble person. Then, every one of these his men, he investeth with his liveries of green, yellow, or some other light wanton colour; and as though they were not gaudy enough I should say, they bedeck themselves with scarfs, ribbons and laces hanged all over with gold rings, precious stones, and other jewels: this done, they tie about either leg twenty or forty bells, with rich handkerchiefs in their hands, and sometimes laid across over their shoulders and necks, borrowed for the most part of their pretty Mopsies and loving Bessies. . . . Thus all things set in order, then have their hobby-horses, dragons and other antics, together with their bawdy pipers and thundering drummers to strike up the devil's dance withal. Then march these heathen company towards

the church and church-yard, their pipers piping, their drummers thundering, their stumps dancing, their bells jingling, their handkerchiefs swinging about their heads like madmen, their hobby-horses and other monsters skirmishing amongst the throng : and in this sort they go to the church (I say) and into the church (though the minister be at prayer or preaching), dancing and swinging their handkerchiefs over their heads in the church, like devils incarnate, with such a confused noise, that no man can hear his own voice. Then, the foolish people they look, they stare, they laugh, they fleer, and mount upon forms and pews to see these goodly pageants solemnised in this sort. Then, after this, about the church they go again and again, and so forth into the churchyard, where they have commonly their summer-halls, their bowers, arbours, and banqueting houses, set up, wherein they feast, banquet and dance all that day and (peradventure) all the night too."

Life on the village green in Merrie England as we have seen was lively in a fashion that we, in our time, can but dimly imagine. If we have lost the faculty for playing, they possessed the secret. If their games lacked rules and referees, and were merely boisterous expressions of the joy of living, they were also

characteristic of the splendid spirit of the people, who, it must be remembered, were the background of the canvas on which Shakespeare and his fellows worked. Our modern interest in folk dancing is a tribute to the virile pleasures of the Elizabethans. To enjoy robust games one must keep something of the light-heartedness and spontaneity of children. Elizabethans were still living in wonderland. Our forefathers of the village green had not lost a sense of awe. In their sport they shared their children's enthusiasm—and innocence. There were few lookers-on in the games of those days.

MERRIE ENGLAND AT PLAY

—Ay! and they caper
But not without cutting: you shall see to-morrow
The hall floor peck'd and dinted like a mill-stone,
Made with their high shoes. Though their skill be small
Yet they tread heavy where their hobnails fall.—

THOMAS HEYWOOD, *A Woman Killed with Kindness.*

IF there was in Merrie England something of the spirit of Puck, that mischievous sprite, who beckoned from the glades of Arcadia, there was also abroad in those robust times the harsh laughter of Poins, Bardolph and Pistol, those cut-throat mem-

bers of Falstaff's squad, who preferred a cudgel to a curtsey, and a scuffle to a song. There was more of Pistol than Puck in the games of Merrie England. When the Elizabethan played it was his custom to " tread heavy." Football, whether played in the city streets, or between sticks in country meadows, was a wild scramble. The Englishman was a full-blooded fellow with a rare store of animal spirits, and when he played there was a good deal of head-cracking. If he was a spectator it was at such gruesome pastimes as bear or bull baiting, and cock-fighting. If he ventured to attend the gentler games, such as tennis or bowls, he gambled and swore so heartily that vigorous methods had to be adopted to keep the rougher spirits away. Gallants were, at this time, learning to use the fork at table. To a people who gloried in hard-hitting, hard-swearing, and hard-betting, this was gross effeminacy.

We can see from the advice of James I to his eldest son, Henry, Prince of Wales, what the cultured gentry thought about the games of the time. " Certainly bodily exercises, and games are very commendable, as well as for banishing of idleness, the mother of all vice, as they make the body able and durable for travel," wrote James, who added, " but from this Court I debar all rough and violent exercises."

Football, he said, was "meter for laming than making able."

"The exercises that I would have you use, although but moderately, not making a craft of them, are running, leaping, wrestling, fencing, dancing and playing at the catch, or tennis, archery, pall mall, and suchlike other fair and pleasant field games." "Most honourable of all," continued James, "were those games on horse-back, such as tilt the ring and hunting the hounds." Of hawking, James said, "It neither resembleth the wars, so near as hunting doeth in making a man a hardy and skilful rider in all grounds, and is more uncertain and subject to mischances, and which is worst of all, is there through an extreme stirrer up of the passions."

Thomas Heywood, the Elizabethan dramatist, in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, written in 1607, has given us a dramatic example of the passion aroused by hawking. Heywood, we are told, used in his dialogue the language of the day much as the people of the time would speak it. Sir Charles Mountford and Sir Francis Acton appear on the scene with their falconer and huntsmen, and compete together for a wager. The two gentlemen quarrel on the merits of their respective hawks. Sir Francis says, "Come, come, your hawk is but a

rifler." This is how the sportsmen's quarrel proceeds :

Sir C. : How!

Sir F. : Ay, and your dogs are trindle-tails and curs.

Sir C. : You stir my blood. You keep not one good hound in all your kennel. Nor one good hawk upon your perch.

Sir F. : How, knight!

Sir C. : So, knight. You will not swagger, sir ?

Sir F. : Why, say I did ?

Sir C. : Why, sir. I say you would gain as much by swaggering as you have got by wagers on your dogs : you will come short in all things.

Sir F. : Not in this : now I'll strike home.

Sir C. : Thou shalt to thy long home, or I will want my will.

Sir F. : All they that love Sir Francis follow me.

Sir C. : All that affect Sir Charles draw on my part.

The forces of the two gentlemen divide. Sir Charles wins the day, and Sir Francis's two huntsmen are left killed on the field.

We are told by Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, that the chief pastimes of country folk were bowling, shooting, playing with keel pins, quoits, pitching of bars, cudgels, wrestling, leaping, running, fencing, swimming, football and running on the quintain. All classes, whether of the town or the country, greatly enjoyed bull-baitings. In those days, the scene of the greatest open-air sports was the Cotswold games at which thousands of people

assembled from the surrounding countryside. A mock castle of cardboard was set up, and there were exhibitions of wrestling, leaping, cudgels and pitching the bar, whilst the gentlemen coursed the hare, and the women danced.

From the belfries of the churches would ring out mad and merry peals, for, after a convivial glass at the village inn, men would sometimes climb the church tower and ring out an echoing peal of bells for exercise, and the sheer fun of living. Elizabethans loved a good noise, whether it was the sound of the cannon or the beating of a drum.

Tennis was a favourite game with the gentry. It was played in close or open courts with balls stuffed with hair. A racquet, much more crude than the racquet of our time, was used, or the open palm of the hand. Henry VII and Henry VIII were both experts of the game, and there were tennis courts at Woodstock, Wycombe, Sheen, Greenwich, Richmond, Blackfriars, Whitehall and Westminster. The chroniclers tell us that Henry VII watched a match between the King of Castile, who used a racquet, and the Marquis of Dorset, who used his hand only, and was given fifteen points on that account—not too generous a concession!

Joseph Strutt, in his record of English sports, tells

us that in a letter, written in 1565, to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, Thomas Randolphe wrote: "I have it from this nobleman's mouth that lately the Duke of Norfolk and my Lord of Leicester were playing at tennis, the Queen beholding of them, and my Lord Robert, being very hot and sweating, took the Queen's napkin out of her hand and wiped his face, which the Duke seeing said that he was too saucy, and swore that he would lay his racquet upon his face. Hereupon arose a great trouble, and the Queen offended sore with the Duke."

London in those times was provided with fourteen courts for tennis and bowling. These, however, were the resort of such a blasphemous, noisy crowd, that decent, law-abiding citizens never ventured near. Play was prohibited on Sunday mornings, and on certain times during holy days. It was also necessary to restrict certain courts to men of rank, or to those who could show goods or land to the value of £10. Most of the tennis courts were covered, and were of various sizes, the largest, that at Essex House, was eighty-four feet long, twenty-two feet broad, and twenty-one feet high. The smallest, Strutt tells us, was fifty-five feet long, sixteen feet broad, and seventeen feet high.

Pepys, that shrewd observer of men and affairs,

describes a tennis match in which Charles II took part: "January 4th (1664). To the Tennis Court and there saw the King play at Tennis, and others; but to see how the King's play was extolled without any cause at all was a loathsome sight, though sometimes indeed he did play very well and deserved to be commended; but such open flattery is beastly."

On September 2nd, 1667, Pepys recorded: "A great match at tennis" played between Prince Rupert and Captain Thomas Cooke, who was Master of the Whitehall Tennis Court, against Baptist May, Keeper of the Privy Purse, and Sir Thomas Chicheley. The King and Court were present, and the players were described as the best in the nation. "But this," writes Pepys, "puts me in mind of what I observed in the morning, that the King, playing at tennis, had a steele-yard carried to him, and I was told it was to weigh him after he had done playing; and at noon Mr. Ashburnham told me that it is only the King's curiosity which he usually hath of weighing himself before and after his play to see how much he loses in weight by playing, and this day he lost 4½ lbs."

Hockey, which apparently found its birth in Ireland, has a very distinguished history, and "hockie stickes or staves" are referred to in a record of Galway of 1527. Football, however, was

frowned upon by authority. It was prohibited in the reign of Edward I by a public edict, because it was a dangerous rival to archery, which latter pastime in Elizabeth's day was disappearing before the advance of musketry. The football itself was very much as it is in our own time, that is, a blown bladder encased in leather. The goal posts were usually two sticks placed two or three feet apart, and the field was eighty or a hundred yards long. Henry VIII and Elizabeth both made efforts to check the popularity of football, and Sir Thomas Eliot, writing in 1531, says that it was " nothing but beastly fun and extreme violence." Stubbes, of course, denounced it with unmitigated scorn, and again we are indebted to his puritanic indignation for the most graphic picture of football as it was played in Merrie England. He wrote in his *Anatomie of Abuses* : " For as concerning football playing, I protest unto you it may rather be called a friendly kind of fight, than a play or recreation ; a bloody and murdering practice, than a fellowly sport or pastime. For doth not every one lie in wait for his adversary, seeking to overthrow him and to pick him on his nose, though it be upon hard stones, in ditch or dale, in valley or hill, or what place soever it be he careth not, so he have him down. And he that can serve the most of this fashion, he is counted

Baiting the Bear.

the only fellow, and who but he? So that by this means, sometimes their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their legs, sometimes their arms, sometimes one part thrust out of joint, sometimes another, sometimes their noses gush out with blood, sometimes their eyes start out, and sometimes hurt in one place, sometimes in another. But whosoever scapeth away the best goeth not scot-free, but is either sore wounded, and bruised, so as he dieth of it, or else scapeth very hardly. And no marvel, for they have sleights to meet one betwixt two, to dash him against the heart with their elbows, to hit him under the short ribs with their gripped fists, and with their knees to catch him upon the hip, and to pick him on his neck, with an hundred such murdering devices. And hereof groweth envy, malice, rancour, choler, hatred, displeasure, enmity and what not else; and sometimes fighting, brawling, contention, quarrel picking, murder, homicide and great effusion of blood, as experience daily teacheth."

Golf, which was called "goff," was a very fashionable game in Elizabeth's time. The golf ball was a leather case stuffed with feathers. The following story is told of Henry, the son of James I, who was once playing a game and his schoolmaster stood talking near by. The Prince warned his master to

stand further off, and thinking that his master had complied, he lifted up his club to strike the ball. Thereupon, one who was standing by cried, " Beware that you hit not Master Newton." The Prince then dryly remarked, " Had I done so, I had but paid my debts."

It is good to know that cricket, of whose praises both poets and prose writers have sung, was born in England. There was a game called " cryc," played with a cricket bat as early as the thirteenth century. This, allied with the later game of Stool Ball, gave us the game as we know it to-day. The wickets are an evolution of the three-legged stool.

The quintain was established for the training of soldiers long before the days of Queen Elizabeth. When first introduced, the quintain was a pole surmounted by a shield, or a wooden representation of a fierce Saracen, armed with a shield and wooden sabre. A soldier on horseback would run at the quintain, and if his lance were badly aimed, the quintain would spin round, and the unlucky horseman would receive a thwack on the head from the dummy's sabre. Stow, in his *Survey of London*, tells us that the game of running at the quintain was practised in summer and winter, and he tells us that " he that hit not the broad end of the quintain was of all men

laughed to scorn, and he that hit it full, if he rid not the faster, had a sound blow in his neck with a bag full of sand hung on the other end. I have also, in the summer season, seen some upon the river of Thames rowed in wherries, with staves in their hands, flat at the fore end, running one against another, and for the most part, one or both overthrown, and well ducked."

A sport of the most cruel character, bull baiting and bear baiting, was enthusiastically followed by the mass of the people in the time of Elizabeth. Happily within the course of the following century, men of taste and learning, such as Pepys and John Evelyn, were repelled by the barbarous nature of the pastime. We can gather from the common saying, "Just like a bear garden!" how vociferous was the audience at these displays. Thomas Cartwright, another chronicler, confesses that "if there be a bear or a bull to be baited in the afternoon, or a jackanapes to ride on horseback, the minister hurries the service over in a shameful manner, in order to be present at the show." There were two bear gardens in Southwark, on the south of the Thames, and Queen Elizabeth, a sportswoman if ever there was one, delighted in attending these gruesome spectacles, which frequently formed part of special festivities arranged for visitors to the Court.

Stow, who we must remember was writing in 1603, says : " As to the baiting of bulls and bears, they are to this day much frequented, namely, in Beargardens, on the Bank's side, wherein be prepared scaffolds for beholders to stand upon," but the most vivid picture of the pastime is given by Hentzner, a German visitor, who travelled through England in 1598 : " There is a place built in the form of a Theatre, which serves for the baiting of Bulls and Bears ; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bulldogs ; but not without great risk to the Dogs, from the horns of the one and the teeth of the other ; and it sometimes happens they are killed on the spot. Fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded, or tired. To this entertainment there often follows that of whipping a blinded Bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain. He defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not quite active enough to get out of it, and tearing the Whips out of their hands and breaking them. At these Spectacles, and everywhere else, the English are constantly smoking Tobacco."

On Sunday, January 13th, 1583, a crowd gathered at Paris Garden in Southwark to see the bear-baiting, and in the midst of the sport, the scaffolding and galleries collapsed, and 200 people were seriously injured, eight being killed outright.

Queen Elizabeth was entertained by the sport at Killingworth, and an eye-witness, writing to a London merchant, said: "It was a sport very pleasant to see, the bear with his pink eyes leering after his enemies' approach, the nimbleness and wit of the dog to take his advantage, and the force and experience of the bear again to avoid the assaults: if he were bitten in one place, how he would pinch in another to get free: that if he were taken once, then what shift, with biting, with clawing, with roaring, tossing and tumbling, he would work to wind himself from them." When a bear-baiting figured in the programme of the day's sports, it was the custom for the promoters to arrange a procession. The bear, with an ape upon its back, was led through the town in order that the people might see for themselves what manner of beast was to be baited.

On August 14th, 1666, Pepys and his wife, after dining, visited the bear garden, "where," wrote Pepys, "I have not been, I think, of many years, and saw some good sport of the bull's tossing of the dogs,

one into the very boxes. But it is a very rude and nasty pleasure. We had a great many hectors in the same box with us (and one very fine went into the pit and played his dog for a wager, which was a strange sport for a gentleman)." Evelyn has the following entry in his diary, dated June 16th, 1670 : " I went with some friends to the Bear Garden, where was cock-fighting, dog-fighting, beare and bull baiting, it being a famous day for all these butcherly sports, or rather barbarous cruelties. The bulls did exceeding well, but the Irish wolfe-dog exceeded, which was a tall greyhound, a stately creature indeede, who beate a cruell mastiff. One of the bulls toss'd a dog full into a *lady's lap*, as she sate in one of the boxes at a considerable height from the arena. Two poore dogs were kill'd, and so all ended with the ape on horse-back, and I most heartily weary of the rude and dirty pastime, which I had not seene, I think, in twenty yeares before."

Bowls, as we have seen by the efforts to check the game, was very popular in the large houses built in the time of Elizabeth. Bowling greens were often part of the decorative scheme of the garden. It is difficult for us, accustomed to see friendly old gentlemen engaged in a quiet game, to understand how it became subject to the antagonism of authority in

those times, but John Earl, in his *Micro-cosmographie* written in 1628, has given us the secret :

" A bowl-alley is the place where there are three things thrown away besides bowls, to wit, time, money and curses, and the last ten for one. The best sport in it is the gamester's, and he enjoys it that looks on and bets not. It is the school of wrangling, and worse than the schools, for men will cavil here for an hair's breadth, and make a stir where a straw would end the controversy. . . . It is the best discovery of humours ; especially in the losers, where you have fine variety of impatience, whilst some fret, some rail, some swear, and others more ridiculously comfort themselves with philosophy. To give you the moral of it : it is the emblem of the world, or the world's ambition ; where most are short, or over, or wide, or wrong-biased, and some few jostle in to the ' mistress ' fortune."

The favourite game of the apprentices was cudgels, with which the lusty fellows were wont to break each other's head, and apparently he who first drew blood was the victor. In *Sir Thomas More,* an anonymous play of the sixteenth century, and ascribed in part to Shakespeare, one scene is devoted to three or four 'prentices with a pair of cudgels. A discussion arises as to who is the best back swordsman in England. A

'prentice declares for one, George Philpots, to which his friend says, " I will cudgel that opinion out of ye " ; and, in another scene Sir John Munday, a city knight, is discovered hurt, and in reply to the anxious inquiry of the Lord Mayor, says :

> A little knock, my lord. There was even now
> A sort of prentises playing at cudgells ;
> I did command them to their masters' houses ;
> But one of them, backed by the other crew,
> Wounded me in the forehead with his cudgel.

Hunting was in Elizabeth's time, as in ours, a royal game, and Queen Elizabeth herself followed the hounds, and hunted the boar, the hare, and the otter. The wild boar roamed the woodlands of Merrie England. Among the nobility hunting had only one rival in hawking, the favourite sport of the aristocracy in the sixteenth century.

We, however, are concerned more with the pleasures of the commoners, who, as we have seen, responded with extraordinary delight to all such pastimes as made it possible for them to express their exuberance in action. The country dance was then much nearer to the heart and life of the people than it has ever been since. They had no need to import their dances from abroad, and in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, a play we have already drawn upon for a picture of life in the seventeenth century,

Thomas Heywood refers to the more popular country dance of the time. The " Cushion " dance was begun by either a man or a woman who, cushion in hand, danced round the room, stopped and sang " This dance it can no further go," and by this means a partner was drawn into the dance, and so on until the whole company was engaged. The " Hay " was a kind of reel. Heywood's play is a lively record of a scene which must have been common in many a barn and manor house of Merrie England :

Enter NICHOLAS *and* JENKIN, JACK SLIME, ROGER BRICKBAT, *with country wenches and two or three musicians.*

Jen.: Come, Nick, take you Joan Miniver to trace withal ; Jack Slime, traverse you with Sisly Milkpail ; I will take Jane Trubkin, and Roger Brickbat shall have Isabel Motley. And now that they are busy in the parlour, come, strike up ; we'll have a crash here in the yard. . . .

Slime: Foot it quickly. If the music overcome not my melancholy, I shall quarrel ; and if they suddenly do not strike up, I shall presently strike thee down.

Jen.: No quarrelling, for God's sake! Truly, if you do, I shall set a knave between ye.

Slime: I come to dance, not to quarrel. Come, what shall it be—" Rogero " ?

Jen.: " Rogero! " no ; we will dance the " Beginning of the World."

Sisly: I love no dance so well as " John, come kiss me now."

Nick: I that have ere now deserv'd a cushion, call for the " Cushion-dance."

Brick: For my part, I like nothing so well as "Tom Tyler."

Jen.: No; we'll have the "Hunting of the Fox."

Slime: "The Hay!" "the Hay!" there's nothing like "the Hay."

Nick: I have said, do say, and we will say again——

Jen.: Every man agree to have it as Nick says.

All: Content.

Nick: It hath been, it now is, and it shall be——

Sisly: What, Master Nicholas? What?

Nick: Put on your smock o' Monday.

Kissing was the great attraction of the romping dances of the time, and in "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush" we have a direct descendant of the Elizabethan barn-yard frolic.

THE LORD OF MISRULE

England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'T was Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'T was Christmas told the merriest tale,
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.
SIR WALTER SCOTT, *Marmion.*

CHRISTMAS was a time of laughter and make-believe, of song and friendship. In the time of Queen Elizabeth, Father Christmas reigned with a majesty that was never reached before, and has never been equalled since. True, the Lord of the Manor and the notables of the countryside had begun to seek their Christmas in town; the old

glory of Christmas in the Baron's hall was passing, but Christmas was the principal holiday of the year, and eating and drinking were the chief ritual of this festival.

The Puritans were, of course, appalled by the freedom, the gay fooling and the elaborate play-acting with which Christmas was celebrated. With solemn warning they reminded those who would hearken to them that the feasting of Christmas had its origin in the festivals of Rome, where licence and gaiety marked the celebrations to Saturn, the father of the gods. Bacchus, that lively but imprudent spirit, was the President of the Saturnalia, and Bacchus, they urged, inspired the English Christmas. Christmas finds its beginnings as much in the merry-making of the winter festival of Rome as in the solemnity and beauty of the Nativity.

During the festival to Saturn, Rome made no war, decreed that there were to be no capital executions, slaves were allowed some show of liberty, hymns were sung in honour of Saturn, and envy and bitterness were forgotten. The Puritans were not slow to point to the origin of Christmas merry-making, and one of them wrote: "If we compare our Bacchanalian Christmasses and New Years Tides with these Saturnalia and Feasts of Janus, we shall find such

near affinity between them both in regard of time (they being both in the end of December and on the first of January) and in their manner of solemnizing (both of them being spent in revelling, epicurisme, wantonness, idleness, dancing, drinking, stage-plays, masques, and carnal pomp and jollity), that we must needs conclude the one to be but the very ape or issue of the other."

The Northern nations of Europe had, in long years past, held celebrations in honour of their god, Thor, and from them the name Yule was derived. Mistletoe, which through the centuries has been a Christmas decoration, was traced to the Pagan rites of the Druids and forbidden its place in the churches.

The England of Elizabeth's time was a rich soil for the growth of Christmas merry-making. " It is now Christmas and not a cup of drink must pass without a carol ; the beasts, fowl and fish come to a general execution, and the corn is ground to dust for the bakehouse, and the pastry," wrote Nicholas Breton, in 1626. It was a time of card-playing and gaming with the dice. Many a youth, anxious to prove his metal, went home a poorer man. Generous presents were given, and " Good cheer! " and " God be wi' you! " echoed across the threshold of Merrie England. There was wine in plenty, and piping and dancing.

Log fires blazed on every hearth ; for once in the year the beggars found warmth and good fare on every hand. Masquers and mummers visited the halls of the nobility, and melancholy was put out of countenance. " In sum, it is a holy time, a duty in Christians for the remembrance of Christ, and custom among friends for the maintenance of good fellowship. In brief, I thus conclude of it : I hold it a memory of the Heaven's love and the world's peace, the mirth of the honest, and the meeting of the friendly," wrote Breton.

Capons and hens, ducks and geese were all destined to die. Plums and spices, which had been stored up by every careful housewife, were transformed into the delectable plum porridge. Whilst the youngsters danced in barn or farmyard, the old folk sat by the fire. Holly and ivy hung over their door and window, and the only servant unable to join in the Christmas merry-making, without a thought to his labours, was the cook.

The Lord of Misrule, who dominated Christmas with regal authority, and who more than any other may be recognised as the symbol of those laughter-loving, rollicking times, was abominated by the Puritan spoil-sports. He was the " Master of Merry Disports," and he reigned in the house of the King, of

the Archbishops, of every nobleman and at the Inns of Court and the Universities. From the twelfth century he had ruled over all such festivals. He was a master of ceremonies, a producer of masques, an organiser of pageants ; chairman, actor, jester, all in one.

The importance of this Christmas aristocrat may be gauged from the account we have of the reign of one famous Lord of Misrule, George Ferrers, who in September, 1552, was appointed Lord of Misrule to the King for twelve days. In his court, assembled solely to make laughter, were a chancellor, treasurer, vice-chamberlain, astronomer, poet ; gentlemen-ushers, pages of honour, trumpeters, heralds, orators, jesters and jugglers. In a delightful letter sent by Ferrers to Sir Thomas Cawarden, Master of the King's Revels, we are given an interesting description of how the court pageantry was arranged. Ferrers explained that in the previous year, when he first entered the presence of the King, he had stepped out of the moon! This must have been, of course, some piece of pantomime machinery. Now, he wrote, he had arranged to step into his kingdom of Misrule from " The Great Waste," an imaginary place beyond the stars where there was neither fire, air, nor earth. On the previous year, we learn, he had been intro-

duced under a canopy : the year under review he had not decided whether to enter on a triumphal chair or riding upon the back of some strange beast, but he had decided upon his coat-of-arms, which was the seven-headed serpent, and his crest was a holly bush. On St. Stephen's Day, Ferrers wished to be with the King before dinner. He had arranged a spectacular ceremony on the Thames, near London Bridge. His Admiral was to receive him with the King's brigantine, with other vessels in attendance. The poop of the Admiral's vessel was to be covered with white and blue decorations.

This Lord of Misrule, who was plainly a master of pantomime, full of ideas, arranged all the details of the pastimes and pageantry which were to be set before His Majesty.

One day there was to be a feat of arms, another "A challenge performed with hobby-horses," another hunting and hawking, and so on. This busy lord of laughter presided over brilliant stage effects, such as most of us have seen only in Christmas pantomimes. He demanded five suits for the twelve days, and no detail of the pageantry escaped him.

We can discover in this elaborate make-belief the origin of the English pantomime. One of Queen Elizabeth's Lords of Misrule called himself, in mock

The Lord of Misrule.

splendour, "The High and Mighty Prince Henry, Prince of Purpoole, Archduke of Stapulia and Bernardia; Duke of High and Nether Holborn; Marquis of St. Giles and Tottenham; Count Palatine of Bloomsbury and Clerkenwell; Great Lord of the Cantons of Islington, Kentish Town, Paddington, and Knightsbridge; Knight of the Most Heroical Order of the Helmet, and Sovereign of the same"!

When Francis Vivian was appointed Lord of Misrule, he spent £2,000 out of his own pocket the more magnificently to play his part, and when his brief reign ended he was knighted for his success. Before his twelve days of merry-making began, Vivian attended a special Christmas service in the Temple church. Two chaplains preached before him. As they ascended the pulpit steps, they bowed low before him three times. Thus were laughter and religion allied in the days of Merrie England.

Food was the principal ritual of Christmas festivities in the sixteenth century. The following is the menu of a meal which lasted ten hours, and the condiments, spices, the fruits for this astonishing feast came from Constantinople, Syria, Egypt, and Babylon:

Shield of brawn with mustard.
Boiled capon.

Boiled piece of beef.
Chine of beef, roasted.
Pig, roasted.
Savoury mince-pie, baked.
Hart's tongue, roasted.
Goose, roasted.
Swan, roasted.
Turkey, roasted.
Haunch of venison, roasted.
Pasty of venison.
Kid with a pudding in the belly.
Olive pie.
Couple of capons.
Custard.
Salads.
Fricassees.
Pastes.
Sundries.

With what relish, gusto, health, the poets sang of food :

The cooks shall be busied, by day and by night,
In roasting and boiling, for taste and delight,
Their senses in liquor that's nappy they'll steep,
Though they be afforded to have little sleep ;
They still are employed for to dress us, in brief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef.

Although the cold weather doth hunger provoke,
'T is a comfort to see how the chimneys do smoke ;
Provision is making for beer, ale, and wine,
For all that are willing or ready to dine :
Then haste to the kitchen for diet the chief,
Plum pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef.

Brand, in his invaluable *Popular Antiquities*, has preserved for us a recipe of a Christmas pie of olden times, and it may remind us of the difference between then, when pies were measured in stones, and now when weak digestions are fashionable. We are told that a pie which was brought from Berwick to London was made up of " 2 bushels of flour, 20 lbs. of butter, 4 geese, 2 turkeys, 2 rabbits, 4 wild ducks, 2 woodcocks, 6 snipes, and 4 partridges ; 2 neats' tongues, 2 curlews, 7 blackbirds, and 6 pigeons." That pie, of course, was a curiosity. It was nine feet in circumference, weighed 12 stones, and took two men to serve it, and was made up in the form of a movable truck on four wheels.

From the time of the Middle Ages the Yule log, the wassail bowl, and the boar's head were a hallowed part of the Christmas of England's countryside. The boar's head was the principal dish, and was carried into the baronial hall with much ceremony. We have preserved in a Christmas carol, printed by Wynkyn de Worde, the festive song which accompanied the bringing in of the boar's head :

The Bore's Heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary,
I pray you all synge merely,
Qui estis in convivio.

The Bore's Head, I understande,
Is the chefe servyce in this lande :
Loke wherever it be fande
Servite cum cantico.

Be gladde, Lordes, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayned our stewarde
To chere you all this Christmasse,
The Bore's Head with mustarde.

Plum pudding is, perhaps, the only part of the Christmas ritual which is home-made and thoroughly English. It may have had its beginnings in the old furmety of the twelfth century, which was a curious mixture of boiled wheat, milk, yolk of eggs, raisins, sugar and spice. This furmety became plum-porridge, a weird concoction of brown bread, raisins, currants, prunes, maize and ginger bread, and Charles II, the Merry Monarch, coined the name of plum pudding. Mince pie is honoured in legend, and tradition suggests that because the principal ingredients are fruits from the East, the mince pie itself may be related to the gifts brought by the Three Wise Men.

In Queen Elizabeth's time mincemeat consisted of neats' tongues, chicken, eggs, raisins, orange and lemon-peel, sugar and various spices.

It is good to draw a picture of the traditional Christmas in the hall of the Lord of the Manor, who,

for once, laid aside his authority. The serf, the tenant, the steward, and the bailiff met as equals. The roaring fire was well piled with logs. On the heavy oaken table the "grim boar's head" was crowned with bays and rosemary. The wassail bowl held rich wine, spiced and sweetened, with roasted apples floating upon its surface. Mummers, with cheeks darkened with soot or burnt cork, entertained the Lord of the Manor and his guests.

Shrove Tuesday has, since Roman times, been a day of carnival, a last outburst of pleasure before the Lenten season. In Elizabethan England, Shrove Tuesday was characterised by a licence in excess of that of any other festival. Cock-fighting was the favourite Shrove Tuesday pastime, but still more popular was the unspeakably cruel practice of cock-throwing. One commentator remarks: "Throwing at a cock, the universal Shrovetide amusement, beating the harmless feathered animal to jelly," and an Oxford student, writing in 1679, cheerfully dismisses the horrible practice in the following song:

Cocke a doodle doe, 'tis the bravest Game,
Takes a Cocke from his Dame,
  And binds him to a stake,
How he struts, how he throwes,
How he swaggers, how he crowes,
  As if the day newly brake.

How his Mistress cackles
Thus to find him in shackles,
And tyed to a packe-thread garter,
Oh the Beares and the Bulls
Are but corpulent gulls
To the valiant Shrove-tide Martyr.

It was the custom actually to train the wretched bird to avoid flying missiles so that on the appointed day of its martyrdom it would, by its alacrity, earn the more for its owner. Records show that the proceeds of cock-throwing at Pinner, in Middlesex, went to the relief of the poor rate.

Pancakes were popular on Shrove Tuesday, and Brand has collected for us a delightful description of the Elizabethan pancake, a recipe written by Taylor, the water poet, in 1620. " Shrove Tuesday, at whose entrance in the morning all the whole kingdom is inquiet, but by that time the clock strikes eleven, which (by the help of a knavish sexton) is commonly before nine, then there is a bell rung, cal'd the Pancake-bell, the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted, and forgetful either of manners or humanity ; then there is a thing called wheaten flour, which the cooks do mingle with water, eggs, spice, and other tragical, magical inchantments, and then they put it by little and little into a frying-pan of

boiling suet, where it makes a confused dismal hissing (like the Lernean Snakes in the reeds of Acheron, Stix, or Phlegeton), until at last, by the skill of the cook, it is transformed into the form of a Flip-Jack, called a Pancake, which, with ominous incantation, the ignorant do devour very greedily."

Good Friday was a general fast day, as Nicholas Breton wrote in his *Fantastickes*: "Flesh and fish must be banished all stomachs strong or weak. Now begins the farewell to thin fare, and the fishmongers may shut up their shops till the holy-days be past."

The Easter Egg was the symbol of the Resurrection at the Easter festival. Indeed, it seems to have been associated with religious festivals of all kinds and countries, of Egypt and Greece, since the dawn of civilisation.

On Easter Day sports of all kinds were held. In London mock battles were fought on the Thames, the favourite pastime being tilting at the river quintain.

Spring was in those days, as in ours, the season of love-making, of re-birth, and hopes renewed. As the age of Elizabeth was itself the Spring-tide of England, it is meet that chroniclers of those times should be able to translate the spirit of Spring. Nicholas Breton

has achieved this in his beautiful prose poem which he wrote when he was nearly eighty years old : " The earth now begins to paint her upper garment, and the trees put out their young buds. The little kids chew their cuds, and the swallow feeds on the flies in the air. The stork cleanseth the brook of the frogs, and the spar-hawk prepares her wing for the partridge. The little fawn is stolen from the doe, and the male deer begin to herd. The spirit of youth is inclined to mirth, and the conscionable scholar will not break a holy-day. The minstrel calls the maid from her dinner, and the lover's eyes do troll like tennis balls. There is mirth and joy, when there is health and liberty : and he that hath money will be no mean man in his mansion. The air is wholesome and the sky comfortable, the flowers odoriferous and the fruits pleasant. I conclude, it is a day of much delightfulness : the sun's dancing day, and the earth's holyday."

The Puritans inveighed with special vehemence against Whitsun-ales. They had good reason to protest, for Whitsun-ales were in truth a remarkable fusion of worldly and church affairs. They were a pagan device for raising funds for the maintenance of the parish churches. During the year, gifts of malt and other provisions were made, and the malt was

brewed in readiness for Whitsuntide, when the parishioners met in the church-yard, or church-house and bought back their victuals and ale. Sometimes the church itself was transformed into the market place. At the end of the day there were wrestling and cudgel playing on the village green, whilst the village elders sat around and watched the pleasantry.

Harvest was in those days " the merry time wherein honest neighbours made good cheer, and God is glorified in his blessings on the earth." At the " Harvest Home" the farmer's cart was decorated with much skill. The horses were draped in white linen, and the village youngsters sang and shouted with joy. Herrick tells us that the villagers, in their delight and thanksgiving, would kiss the sheaves, and " stroak the home-borne wheat." There was, of course, a feast to mark the day :

> Well, on brave boyes, to your Lord's hearth
> Glitt'ring with fire ; where, for your mirth,
> You shall see, first, the large and cheefe
> Foundation of your feast, fat beefe :
> With upper stories, mutton, veale,
> And bacon (which makes full the meale)
> With sev'rall dishes standing by,
> And here a custard, there a pie,
> And here all-tempting Frumentie.

In his journeying through England in 1598, Paul Hentzner met in Windsor a crowd of merry-makers celebrating this festival. "As we were returning to our inn, we happened to meet some country people celebrating their Harvest Home; their last load of corn they crown with flowers, having besides an image richly dressed, by which perhaps they would signify Ceres: this they keep moving about, while men and women, men and maidservants, riding through the streets in the cart, shout as loud as they can till they arrive at the barn."

Each village had its Wake day, or Feast of Dedication, which was the vigil kept by the people of the village in honour of the church saint. The Wake-Day was the yearly festival held on the anniversary of the church's completion or dedication.

The night before Wake-Day the parishioners assembled in the church, and held their vigil until break of day. This festival was, towards the end of Elizabeth's time, much abused, and became a mere excuse for drinking and horse-play. Sports were held in the church-yard, where there were dancing and exhibitions of wrestling and general sports.

Stubbes singled out Wake-Day for attention. "The poor men that bear the charges of these feasts and wakes are the poorer, and keep the worse houses

a long time after, and no marvel, for many spend more on these wakes than all the whole year besides."

Hawkers and pedlars set up their booths and tents in the churchyard, and at the end of the day when the handsomest youths would be busy breaking each other's heads in cudgel play, the older heads would be swimming with ale or beer. Thus the festival which was a solemn tribute to the saint who watched over church and village ended in Pagan forgetfulness. Such were the holidays of England when the most solemn occasions were transformed to laughter and feasting.

"COME TO THE FAIR"

The Mountebank now treads the Stage, and sells
His Pills, his Balsams, and his Ague-Spells;
Now o'er and o'er the nimble tumbler springs,
And on the rope the vent'rous Maiden swings. . .
Here Raree-Shows are seen and Punch's feats,
And Pockets picked in crowds, and various Cheats.

GAY.

"OYEZ! oyez! oyez! The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of the City of London, and his right Worshipful Brethren, the Aldermen of the said City, streightly charge and command, on the behalf of our Sovereign Lord the King, That all manner of

Persons of whatsoever Estate, Degree, or Condition they be, having recourse to this Fair, keep the Peace of our said Sovereign Lord the King." Thus read the attorney of the Lord Mayor of London at the gate leading into the Cloth Fair of Smithfield on St. Bartholomew's Day. By this proclamation Bartholomew Fair was declared open.

For four hundred years before the time of Queen Elizabeth the Lord Mayor, accompanied by one of his attorneys, had driven in his state carriage from the Mansion House to Bartholomew Fair. Puppet shows, monsters, and marvels were assembled from all over the world. Beggars, cut-purses, store-keepers, hawkers and showmen trekked to Smithfield for Bartholomew Fair. To the Puritans of the day it was Babylon, a Babylon of wooden booths and showmen's tricks. Tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, rich men, poor men, beggarmen, and thieves jostled each other. Pick-pockets and apprentices, grooms and gallants crowded on to this gay and restless stage. It was a riot of sound and fury. English folk were alive to the wonders of the world. They were ready to applaud strange creatures from over the seas, and credulous enough to marvel at gilded stage properties, stage tricks, dancing mares, fat boys and giants, rope walkers and mermaids. "What d'ye

lack ? " rang out from all sides. Gingerbread sellers and toymen joined their cries to the general hubbub of this great Babel. In its ribaldry and zest it was the grosser aspect of Merrie England in microcosm.

Before large towns sprang up, fairs were held annually, or sometimes twice in the year in certain parts of England. They were the markets of the countryside, and were first held on heath lands easily accessible to the people of the surrounding parts. The merchants were not allowed to trade after a specified time, which was always announced by proclamation.

In Elizabethan times the two greatest fairs were at Stourbridge, near Cambridge, and Bartholomew Fair. So important were the fairs that a special court was always set up to deal summarily with offences against the special regulations applying to the particular fair. These courts were termed " courts of pie powder," from *poudre des piez*, the term being applied because, say some commentators, justice was done before the complainant could shake the dust of the fair from off his feet, or perhaps from the dusty feet of those who were brought before the justice. It was the lowest court of justice known in England, and the quickest in coming to judgment. It had authority over commercial injuries committed in any particular

fair, and if the fair were only for one day, then the injury must be brought to the court and redressed on that day. It will be readily appreciated that where strangers assembled from all parts of the countryside, it was necessary to safeguard the interests of both merchants and buyers by some such authority.

Bartholomew Fair, with which we are chiefly concerned, because, in the time of Elizabeth, it had reached the height of its popularity and greatness, had its origin in the twelfth century, and is associated with the priory, hospital, and church of St. Bartholomew, founded in the reign of Henry I by the King's minstrel, Rahere. Henry II granted the Priory the privilege of setting up a fair for three days at Bartholomew-tide. It was originally intended to be the Mecca of clothiers of England and drapers of London. Their booths and stalls were set up in the churchyard. The priory of St. Bartholomew was dissolved in the time of Henry VIII, but the property was restored in the time of Mary, and ultimately passed to Lord Rich in the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Bartholomew Fair, however, continued to be held at Smithfield, where was also a market-place for cattle, hay and straw, and Stow, writing in the sixteenth century, tells us that jousts and tournaments were held there. It became also the

resort of thieves and ruffians, of bullies and swashbucklers.

Paul Hentzner, the German tutor, through whose eyes we are able to capture intimate pictures of Elizabethan times, visited Bartholomew Fair in 1598. Five years before his visit the fair was closed because of the ravages of the Plague, and five years later it was closed again for the same cause. " It is worthy of observation," wrote Hentzner, " that every year, upon St. Bartholomew's Day, when the Fair is held, it is usual for the mayor, attended by the twelve principal aldermen, to walk in a neighbouring field, dressed in his scarlet gown, and about his neck a golden chain, to which is hung a golden Fleece, and, besides, that particular ornament which distinguishes the most noble order of the Garter. When the mayor goes out of the precincts of the city, a sceptre and sword and a cap are borne before him, and he is followed by the principal aldermen in scarlet gowns with gold chains, himself and they on horseback. Upon their arrival at a place appointed for that purpose, where a tent is pitched, the mob begin to wrestle before them, two at a time ; the conquerors receive rewards from the magistrates. After this is over, a parcel of live rabbits are turned loose among the crowd, which are pursued by a number of boys,

Bartholomew Fair.

who endeavour to catch them, with all the noise they can make. While we were at this show, one of our company, Tobias Salander, Doctor of Physic, had his pocket picked of his purse, with nine crowns, which, without doubt, was so cleverly taken from him by an Englishman, who always kept very close to him, that the Doctor did not perceive it."

The proclamation, whose opening sentences we used to begin this chapter, warned the people against breaking the peace, and the merchants against fraud and deceit. Such warning was necessary, for Bartholomew Fair was the happy hunting ground of rogues. It was a great festival honoured by the City of London with some show of splendour and pageantry. The aldermen met the Lord Mayor at the Guildhall chapel; with "their violet gowns lined" they would cut a brave show as they rode on horseback to Newgate, and so to the gate which opened to the cloth fair of Smithfield.

We have, by good fortune, a picture of this fair-ground drawn in detail and with characteristic vigour by Ben Jonson, who, in his comedy *Bartholomew Fair*, has re-created in lively imagery the seething, noisy scene.

Ben Jonson, himself a man of broils, was a brilliant reporter and interpreter of the bustling scenes of

Bartholomew Fair. In *Zeal-of-the-Land* Busy, a hypocritical Puritan, we have a caricature not of any one Puritan, but of Puritanism as seen by the eyes and imagination of one who sought his inspiration, not in the church, but in the tavern. We are told that this Rabbi Busy was more than an elder; he was a prophet. He was a baker who had given over his trade; one who saw visions. To him maypoles and Morris dances were profane and idolatrous. "A notable hypocritical vermin," was Ben Jonson's opinion of him and his kind. His conscience was "lunatic." He affected violence on all occasions, and had cheated a grocer in Newgate Market. He defied all learning but inspiration, and was "a fellow of a most arrogant and invincible dullness."

Ben Jonson, we may be sure, does not let Puritanism down lightly; here is an Elizabethan poet's reply to Stubbes.

Ben Jonson is a splendid guide to the Fair. The booth and stalls are set out, and Justice Overdo, who presides over the court of Pie Powder, has decided to disguise himself, and to move about the Fair as a common person, to discover for himself what are the offences committed therein. "Many are the yearly enormities of this Fair, in whose courts of Pie-

poudres I have had the honour, during the three days, sometimes to sit as judge." In a quarrel between Lanthorn Leatherhead, the hobby-horse man or toy-man, and Joan Trash, the gingerbread woman, we have reported for us the very gesture and accent of the Fair. Leatherhead is bemoaning lack of business :

Leatherhead : The Fair's pestilence dead methinks ; people come not abroad to-day, whatever the matter is. Do you hear, sister Trash, lady of the basket ? Sit farther with your gingerbread progeny there, and hinder not the prospect of my shop, or I'll have it proclaimed in the Fair, what stuff they are made on.

Trash : Why, what stuff are they made on, brother Leatherhead ? Nothing but what's wholesome, I assure you.

Leatherhead : Yes, stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey, you know.

Overdo : Ay! have I met with enormity so soon ? (*Aside.*)

Leatherhead : I shall mar your market, old Joan.

Trash : Mar my market, thou too-proud pedlar! Do thy worst, I defy thee, I, and thy stable of hobby-horses. I pay for my ground, as well as thou dost : an thou wrong'st me, for all thou art parcel-poet, and an inginer, I'll find a friend shall right me, and make a ballad of thee, and thy cattle all over. Are you puft up with the pride of your wares ? Your arsedine ? (imitation of gold leaf).

Leatherhead : Go to, old Joan, I'll talk with you anon ; and take you down too, afore justice Overdo : he is the man must charm you, I'll have you in the Piepoudres.

Trash : Charm me! I'll meet thee face to face, afore his worship, when thou darest : and though I be a little crooked

o' my body, I shall be found as upright in my dealing as any woman in Smithfield, I ; charm me!

Overdo : I am glad to hear my name in their terror yet, this is doing of justice. (*Aside.*)

" What d'ye lack, gentlemen ? " cries Leatherhead, as one or two persons of quality approach his booth. " Maid," he appeals, " see a fine hobby-horse for your master ; cost you but a token (farthing) a week."

" Have you any corns in your feet and toes ? " the corn-cutter interrupts.

" Buy a mouse-trap, or a tormentor for a flea ? " adds the mouse-trap man.

" Buy some gingerbread ? "

" Ballads, ballads! Fine new ballads :

" ' Hear for your love, and buy for your money.' "

The marvels, curiosities, grotesqueries and side-shows of the Fair were known in those days as " motions." There were such " motions " as the bull with five legs, such circus items as the dog that danced the Morris, and the hare that played the tabor, but the chief attraction of Bartholomew Fair were the puppet shows in which a wealth of ingenuity and wit was displayed.

Lanthorn Leatherhead was a puppet-master, and a very clever designer of scenic pageantry. Through

him we learn, in Ben Jonson's play, of the curious efforts made by showmen to exploit the childish wonder of the crowd.

" All the dirt in Smithfield will be thrown at our banner to-day if the matter does not please the people. O the motions that I Lanthorn Leatherhead have given light to, in my time, since my master Pod died! "

We learn that Leatherhead had a puppet show, " a stately thing of Jerusalem," another of Nineveh, of the city of Norwich, and Sodom and Gomorrah. He showed the rising of the 'prentices on Shrove Tuesday, for the Elizabethan audience would not be in any wise put out on hearing that there were rebellious 'prentices in Sodom and Gomorrah. But the best catch-penny was the puppet-show based on the story of Guy Fawkes and the gun-powder plot. " I have presented that to an eighteen or twenty pence audience nine times in an afternoon," cries Leatherhead, who adds that the homely stories are the best, and that there is a danger in too much learning.

When he devised a setting to portray the story of Hero and Leander, he made the Thames the home of the tragic lovers in order not to confuse his audience by classical allusions. " I have only made it a

little easy and modern for the times, sir, that's all," says Leatherhead, in explaining his tricks to a gentleman of quality.

In 1641 Charles I was a suspect, the great quarrel with the Roundheads and Puritans was brewing, but in the Commonwealth the Fair still flourished, the cut-purses plied their craft, the rope-dancers still performed, and these old verses published in 1655 prove that the popularity of Bartholomew Fair had scarcely diminished :

> In fifty-five may I never thrive,
> If I tell you any more than is true,
> To London She came, hearing of the fame
> Of a Fair they call Bartholomew.
>
> In houses of boards, men walk upon cords,
> As easy as squirrels crack filberds ;
> But the cut-purses they do bite, and rob away :
> But those we suppose to be ill-birds.

In 1641 Bartholomew Fair had spread its glories over four parishes, Christ Church, Great St. Bartholomew, Little St. Bartholomew, and St. Sepulchre. It was still remarkable as the museum of strange monsters, clever acrobats, and clever puppet masters. It was, if anything, noisier than ever. Trumpet and drum sounded from many a platform. Harlequins, wild men of the woods, men disguised by all manner

of grotesque costumes attracted the crowd to the various shows. "What d'ye lack?" echoed on all sides, rattles were shaken, fiddles scraped, and swelling this chorus of Babel were the wails from the urchins, who dived and darted hither and thither in the surging crowd, which included the gayest gallants of the day.

There were gamesters and conjurers—who could turn a shilling into a threehalfpenny saucer—well-filled ale-houses, and pigs piping hot. A favourite trick of the rogues of the Fair was to upset one of the stalls as if by accident, and in the confusion thus caused, give their attention to the pockets of the crowd.

The costermongers were often in league with the cut-purses, and, in these sudden broils, would grow richer in the hubbub of a minute than in a day's honest selling. The Judge of the Pie Powders was a busy man!

In Pepys's time Bartholomew Fair lasted fourteen days. "To Bartholomew Fair," he wrote, on August 31st, 1661, "and there met with my Ladies Jemima and Paulina, with Mr. Pickering and Mademoiselle, at seeing the monkeys dance, which was much to see, when they could be brought to do so, but it troubled me to sit among such nasty company. After that

with them into Christ's Hospital, and there Mr. Pickering brought them some fairings, and I did give every one of them a bauble, which was the little globes of glass with things hanging in them, which pleased the ladies very well."

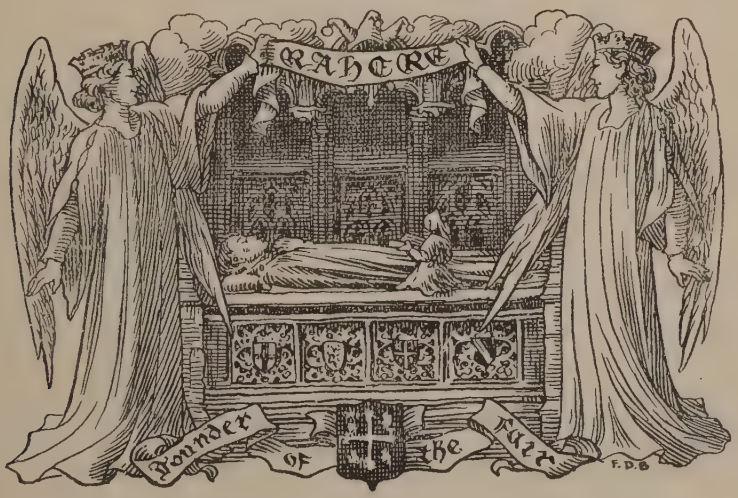
Two years later, Pepys, notwithstanding "the nasty company" ventured again to the Fair, and was very well rewarded. "After dinner done, by coach with my wife to Bartholomew Fair and showed her the monkeys dancing on the ropes, which was strange. There was also a horse with hoofs like rams hornes, a goose with four feet, and a cock with three. Thence to another place, and saw some German Clocke works, the Salutation of the Virgin Mary, and several Scriptural stories: but above all there was at last represented the sea, with Neptune, Venus, mermaids and Ayrid (Arion) on a Dolphin, the sea rocking, so well done that had it been in a gaudy manner and place, and at a little distance, it had been admirable."

Thus the elegant, fastidious Pepys pays a generous tribute to Lanthorn Leatherhead and his clever fellow craftsmen.

Lady Castlemaine, the King's mistress, visited a puppet show at Bartholomew Fair. The crowd soon heard of the presence of this distinguished lady of the

Court, and they packed the alleys around the booth in which the puppet-play—the story of Patient Grisel—was being enacted. Pepys, knowing the dangerous part Lady Castlemaine played in the affairs of state, feared that the people might use her roughly, but his anxiety was needless, for, as my lady stepped down from the booth, the crowd made way for her with every show of respect, and she drove away without incident.

In 1855 Bartholomew Fair died a quiet death. The glory of its trappings, its garish "motions," its marvels and spectacles had been reduced to a few ginger-bread stalls. The story of the Fair covers seven centuries of English life.



ROBIN GOODFELLOW AND FRIENDS

From hag-bred Merlin's time have I
Thus nightly revell'd to and fro ;
And for my pranks men call me by
The name of Robin Goodfellow.
  Fiends, ghosts, and sprites,
  Who haunt the nightes,
The hags and goblins do me know :
  And beldames old
  My feates have told :
So Vale, Vale : ho, ho, ho!

BEN JONSON.

THE Elizabethan child lived in the world of Once-Upon-a-Time. His dreams and his waking hours were inhabited by strange phantoms. Fairies with wings of gossamer peeped in at his window, and

goblins quarrelled in the thatch overhanging the cottage door. The tales that he heard as he sat in the ingle nook may have been old wives' tales, but he believed them, and the old wives believed them, for the folk-lore of Merrie England was crowded with goblins, witches, and fairies that flew by night. The " little folk " who danced in the meadows and turned the milk sour are to us creatures of a children's story-book : to the Elizabethans, they were as real as the beams that crossed their kitchens ; their tricks were solemnly discussed.

When the moon emptied its cold light on the meadow, they really believed that Ariel came riding by on a bat's back : they really believed that the raven s croak was the dread message of death.

Wonders were crowding in upon the mind and imagination of the Elizabethans. Strange worlds were being discovered, and still stranger ones were lying in the mists of legend and phantasy. Drake's *Golden Hind*, which was then lying by Thames side for all to see, was to them no ordinary ship. Travellers brought back tales of fearful battles between dragons and unicorns. If their words were doubted, why, they showed a piece of the horn, broken from the unicorn, before it was poisoned by the dragon's deadly tail. Sailors, with an open-mouthed audience

of shore-dwellers, spoke of men in foreign lands whose heads protruded from their chests, fishes that walked on land and climbed trees, of monkeys that played parlour games, and parrots that held solemn debates on learned subjects. These fantastic stories were believed by the superstitious people of Merrie England.

How could the scoffers deny the existence of fairies, elves, and sprites, when a walk to the end of the lane would show them Jack o' Lantern's torch frisking and leaping over the fens: and a hundred eyes twinkling and winking from every bank and coppice? Did they think of glow-worms? Not they! King and commoner alike paid this respect to the fairy couriers. "Our eyes cannot deceive," they would say. "Look! Here in the meadow is a fairy ring. See how the cattle avoid it. Believe in fairies? Why, of course!"

With the airy enchantment of fairy lore were allied the miserable torments framed to combat the evils associated with the practice of witchcraft. Of this, the darker aspect of the folk-lore of Merrie England, we shall have more to say.

Robin Goodfellow was the busiest of the fairies. Shakespeare has described him for us disguised as Puck. In a little book, published in 1628, the merry

pranks of Robin Goodfellow were carefully recorded. When people read how Oberon, Emperor of the fairies' Court, came to hear of the fame of clever Robin Goodfellow, they did not doubt that the account was a sober record of fact. One night, so the story went, as Robin lay tired out after a day of teasing poor mortals who were nearly crazed with his mischief, Oberon called :

> " Robin, my son, come quickly rise :
> First stretch, then yawn, and rub your eyes ;
> For thou must go with me to-night,
> To see, and taste of my delight."

Robin hastily obeyed the royal summons. He found the fairy court assembled. Oberon was there, and a host of fairies dressed in green silk. " Welcome! " they cried. Oberon himself took Robin's hand and they danced together to the music played by Little Tom Thumb, who " had an excellent bag-pipe made of a wren's quill and the skin of a Greenland louse." So sweet and piercing was the music " that a Scottish pipe compared to it, it would no more come near it, than a Jew's trump (Jew's harp) doth to an Irish harp."

Secrets known only to Oberon were shown to Robin Goodfellow, who in return for the homage paid him, sang them this song :

Elves, urchins, goblins all, and little fairies
They do filch, black, and pinch maids of the dairies ;
Make a ring on the grass with your quick measures,
Tom shall play, and I'll sing for all your pleasures.

In return the fairies, Pinch, Gull and Grim, told Robin their missions in the fairy kingdom. Indeed, Pinch's task resembled very closely Robin's own exploits amongst the dairies and the farmyards of Merrie England. "Sometimes," whispered Pinch, "I find a slut sleeping in the chimney corner, when she should be washing of her dishes, or doing something else which she hath left undone : her I pinch about the arms, for not laying her arms to her labour. Some I find in their bed snorting and sleeping, and their houses lying as clean as a nasty dog's kennel ; in one corner bones, in another egg-shells, behind the door a heap of dust, the dishes under feet, and the cat in the cupboard : all these sluttish tricks I do reward with blue legs, and blue arms."

Gull, so the book tells us, deceived folk with a feigned voice. The mischievous fellow would lie on the stomachs of his victims, and give them many aches and pains. He, it was, who stole the children from their beds, and in their place left sprites and hob-goblins called changelings. He stole milk and cream and feasted on them.

Grim walked with the owl, and frightened people with his strange wailings. He crept in at merry pastimes, and stole the provender. When men lay sick he appeared at their windows and made a fearful noise like a screech owl, and the watchers at the bedside would say, " Now the wretched man can never recover."

Swifter than lightning Robin flew. He met night wanderers and with his fearful cries and mutterings lured them through woods and mires. He could change himself into a man, an ox, a dog, or a horse, but if any foolish venturer dared to mount him, swifter than wind he carried them over the country through pools and ponds. He it was who at feasts blew out the candles and kissed the maids, who pinched the lazy house-servants, crept into mouse-traps, and leapt out, crying, " ho, ho, ho! " when the good man of the house came to see what his trap had caught.

In Ben Jonson's play *Love Restored,* Robin Goodfellow comes on to the stage just as the players are lamenting that there is to be no more masquing: " No masque indeed," cries Robin, " what do I hear then? A fine trick, a piece of England's joy." Robin explains to the players how he managed to come in upon them. " First I came with authority,

and said, I was an engineer, and belonged to the motions." (Robin Goodfellow was obviously thinking of Bartholomew Fair.) He transformed himself into an old woman, pretended to be a musician, a " feather maker of Blackfriars," and a citizen's wife. All failed. " In this despair, when all invention and translation too failed me," cried the discomfited fairy spirit, " I e'en went back, and stuck to this shape you see me in of mine own, with my broom and my candles, and came on confidently, giving out, I was a part of the Device."

Oberon held his court in green and pleasant pastures.

You must not think that the children, indeed their parents as well, did not believe in the reality of fairies and their tricks. Why, they would tell you in poetry and prose Oberon's very dress, and give you the menu of his feasts. Oberon wore a cobweb shirt, a waistcoat made of the Trout-fly's golden wing, his doublet was a four-leaved true-love grass, and his breeches were of fine fleece woven by Arachne herself before she foolishly over-stepped her powers by competing with the goddess Athene.

When His Majesty sat down before a smooth and rounded mushroom his courtiers, we are told in one poem, gave him choice wheat, his thirst was quenched

Jack O'Lantern.

F. 86.

with a " Chrystal Pearl of infant Dew," a furze-ball pudding, a pickled maggot or two, and the broken heart of a nightingale. Why, Shakespeare himself was in league with Oberon and Robin Goodfellow! He, Ben Jonson and Herrick spoke of elves and " demy-puppets " not with the contempt of familiarity, but with the homage and admiration of courtiers. Not believe in fairies? Shakespeare himself told of the adventures of Queen Mab, and surely he must have seen her to have known her ways so well; she who flew " in shape no bigger than an agate stone."

Queen Mab was as mischievous as her son Robin. She, we are told, robbed the dairy, and could help or hinder the farm lass at her work :

> She that pinches Country Wenches
> If they rub not clean their Benches :
> And with sharper nails remembers,
> When they rake not up the embers.

Fairy rings were everywhere to be seen, mushrooms grew in them, and the fairies' court was held therein. On any common of Merrie England, the elves and sprites danced around their ring, whilst Queen Mab cried " Bravo! " from a molehill. When their dancing was over, they discussed the operations of the night,

and woe betide those sluts who snored before the hearth was clean! "They shall have nips from toe unto the head," and Herrick warns the wenches:

> If ye will with Mab finde grace,
> Set each platter in its place;
> Rake the Fire up and get
> Water in ere Sun be set:
> Wash your pales and cleanse your dairies,
> Sluts are loathsome to the Fairies:
> Sweep your house: who doth not so
> Mab will pinch her by the Toe.

Who has not heard of a changeling? Many and cunning were the devices with which the people of Elizabeth's time guarded their children from the visits of hob-goblins. An author, writing in 1639, describes how attempts were made to steal him from his bed when he was lying in swaddling clothes in a village in Gloucester. He was actually forced from his bed as he lay beside his mother. His sudden and fierce cry awoke the household, and they found him sticking between the bed's head and the wall. "If I had not cried in that manner as I did, our gossips had a conceit that I had been quite carried away by the fairies, they know not whither, and someone else, or changeling as they call it, laid in my room." The author traced the evil of this manifesta-

tion of the power of the unseen world, to the devil himself.

A tricksy fellow, and one who was much feared was Jack o' Lantern, who hovered over fens and pools, and misled those who travelled by night. Terrible were the stories told of his baleful influence. On summer nights he scurried across the marshes and sometimes skipped on the tops of the hedgerows. Travellers said they often heard his harsh laughter after he had left them floundering miserably in the mud and filth, hopelessly lost and affrighted. Our old friend, Hentzner, when travelling from Canterbury to Dover, says that he and his companions saw a great many Jack o' Lanterns "so that we were quite seized with horror and amazement."

But alas! the credulity and superstitions of the people, while introducing them to the airy sprites of the woodlands and groves, also caused them to treat with terrible cruelty those unfortunate women who, because they were poor, deformed and ignorant, and "like a bow buckled and bent together," were thought to be witches. "Some call me witch," cries the witch of Edmonton (1658):

> And being ignorant of myself, they go
> About to teach me how to be one: urging
> That my bad Tongue (by their bad usage made so)

> Forespeaks their Cattle, doth bewitch their Corn,
> Themselves, their Servants, and their Babes at Nurse,
> This they enforce upon me : and in part
> Make me to credit it.

Describing witches and witchcraft in 1646, a writer says : " In every place and parish, every old Woman with a wrinkled Face, a furr'd Brow, a hairy Lip, a gobber Tooth, a Squint Eye, a squeaking Voice, a scolding Tongue, having a rugged Coate on her back, a skull-cap on her head, a spindle in her hand, a Dog or Cat by her side, is not only suspected but pronounced for a Witch." These unfortunate people were supposed to have a commission from the devil himself. With magic ointments composed of the most fearful ingredients they became mistresses of occult powers, flew on broom-sticks, or in sieves, and ended their miserable days at the bottom of a pond or river, or were beaten or burned to death.

Our authority is Reginald Scot, who in *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, published in 1584, describes plainly enough in what awe witches and witchcraft were held. " No one endued with common sense," he writes, " but will deny that the Elements are obedient to witches and at their commandment, or that they may, at their pleasure, send rain, hail, tempests, thunder, lightning ; when she, being but an old

doting woman, casteth a flint-stone over her left shoulder, towards the west, or hurleth a little sea-sand up into the element, or wetteth a broom-sprig in water, and sprinkleth the same in the air; or diggeth a pit in the earth, and putting water therein, stirreth it about with her finger; or boileth hogs' bristles, or layeth sticks across upon a bank, where never a drop of water is; or buryeth sage till it be rotten: all which things are confessed by witches, and affirmed by writers to be the means that witches use, to move extraordinary tempests and rain."

King James was keenly interested in witchcraft. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, it is said, was written especially for him. In *Newes from Scotland*, written in 1591, there is an account of occult happenings in Scotland at Trenent. The deputy bailiff, David Seaton, had a maid called Geillis Duncane. Every other night she secretly crept away from her master's house, and was known to interest herself in all who were sick or in trouble. We are told her actions were miraculous. Seaton grew suspicious and inquisitive. The maid refused to answer, therefore, he and others tormented her grievously, and wrenched her head with a rope, all of which was of no avail, until they discovered the "enemy's mark," which the superstitious identified as the sign of witchcraft, on her

throat. At this the wretched woman confessed her doings were performed through the " wicked allurements and enticements of the devil." She was cast into prison, whereupon she immediately accused three other people, all of whom were arrested.

One of these, Agnes Sampson, was brought before the King and his counsel. " Being examined of the meetings and detestable dealings of those witches, she confessed, that upon the night of All-hallow Even last, she was accompanied, as well with the persons aforesaid, as also with a great many other witches, to the number of two hundred, and that all they together went to sea, each one in a riddle or sieve, and went into the same very substantially, with flagons of wine, making merry and drinking by the way in the same riddles or sieves, to the kirk of North Berwick in Lothian ; and that after they had landed, and danced this reel or short dance, singing all with one voice :

> Commer go ye before, commer go ye,
> Gif ye will not go before, commer let me."

The King was greatly amazed by these confessions. He sent for Geillis Duncane, who played the witches' dance on the Jew's harp to his great delight. So many weird and extraordinary happenings were confessed before King James that not unnaturally he

termed them all " extreme liars." At this, Agnes Sampson, the oldest witch, took the King aside, and whispered in his ear " the very words which passed between the King's Majesty and his Queen at Upslo in Norway, the first night of marriage, with the answer each to other ; whereat the King's Majesty wondered greatly, and swore ' by the living God, that he believed all the devils in hell could not have discovered the same,' acknowledging her words to be most true ; and therefore gave the more credit to the rest that is before declared."

Agnes Sampson wished for the King's death, and this is the manner in which she hoped her wish to be fulfilled. She hung up a black toad by the heels, and collected the venom in an oyster shell. We are told in *Newes from Scotland* that she needed a piece of linen which the King had worn. If she had been able to obtain this the foolish woman claimed that she would have bewitched the King to death, and put him to such extraordinary pains, as if he had been lying upon sharp thorns and ends of needles.

These, then, incredibly silly as they seem to us, were some of the beliefs held by many in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In that remarkable *Newes from Scotland*, Agnes Sampson confessed that when the King was in Denmark, she, accom-

panied by other witches, took a cat and christened it, and after other rites, they all flew, riding in their sieves into the midst of the sea. "This done, there did arise such a tempest in the sea, as a greater hath not been seen; which tempest was the cause of the perishing of a boat or vessel coming from the town of Brunt Island to the town of Leith, wherein was sundry jewels and rich gifts, which should have been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Majesty's coming to Leith."

Scot tells us that the devil taught witches to make ointments from the bones of little children.

A young Englishman once called at Cyprus. The young fellow, says Scot, wandering on the island, called at a woman's house outside the city of Salamin and asked if she had eggs to sell. The woman, a witch, seeing that the young Englishman was a fine, handsome lad, decided to transform him and keep him in her service. She was away so long thinking over a plan that the young man became irritated and alarmed. He called to her to hasten, explaining that the tide would turn and his ship would be gone. The eggs were brought, and as he returned to his ship the sailor broke one and ate it. At this he became dumb and lost his wits. "When he would have entered his ship," says Scot, "the

mariners beat him back with a cudgel, saying: 'What a murrain lacks the ass? Whither the devil will this ass?' " Then he realised that he had been truly bewitched. He returned to the land where he was beaten from place to place just like an ass, and he realised that he was indeed translated. He returned to the witch's cottage and worked in her service for three years. He carried her provisions on his back, and his only comfort was the knowledge that although strangers and beasts thought him an ass, he knew that his mistress and all other witches knew him to be a man.

One day he and his mistress went to town. The witch remained behind for some reason or other, and the poor sailor ass, hearing church bells calling the people to mass and not daring to enter the church because he would have been cudgelled out again, " fell down in the churchyard upon the knees of his hinder legs, and did lift his fore feet over his head, as the priest doth hold the sacrament at the elevation. Which prodigious sight when certain merchants of Genoa espied and with wonder beheld, anon cometh the witch with a cudgel in her hand, beating forth the ass." The merchants, knowing well the ways of witches, set up an inquiry, and the witch was set upon the rack, whereupon she confessed, promising

that if she were allowed to go free she would restore the sailor to his old ship. This was granted, "and the young man returned into his country with a joyful and merry heart."

There were, of course, ways and means of destroying the evil power of witches. Certain herbs were supposed to keep them from the houses. Holy water, hallowed candles, a wolf's head nailed on the door, and certain perfumes sprinkled on the walls were reputed to act effectively against the ministrations of witches and the evil one.

Various methods were adopted to discover who were witches. If they could say the Lord's Prayer, that was a point in their favour. It was supposed that a witch could weep only three tears, and then make use only of her left eye. The usual and most cruel test was that of swimming. A witch woman's right thumb was tied to her left toe, her left thumb to her right toe, and thus, naked, she was thrown into a pond. The belief was that if the victim were guilty, she could not sink; thus she was either drowned proving her innocence, or put to death cruelly because she floated.

Omens and forebodings were strongly held in the credulous fancies of the times. These silly superstitions were satirised in this verse written in 1603:

Wise Gosling did but hear the Scrich Owle crie,
And told his Wife, and straight a Pigge did die.
Another time (after that scurvie Owle)
When Ball, his Dog, at twelve o'clocke did howle,
He jog'd his Wife, and ill lucke, Madge did say,
And Fox by morning stole a Goose away.

A dead man's hand was reputed to cure tumours and swollen glands; a halter used in hanging cured headache, and chips from a gallows worn around the neck in a bag cured the ague. In a curious diary, that of Elias Ashmole, the following information is given—it was written on April 11th, 1681: "I took early in the morning a good dose of Elixir, and hung three Spiders about my neck, and they drove my Ague away."

Charms were supposed to cure man and beasts, to render effective the work in the dairy, and to work for the general good fortune. In an account written in 1655 we come across the saying which is current even in our time:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on.

By repeating this three times, the old women of Elizabethan days would protect their beds from all harm. If, when churning, the butter refused to be made, the farm girl was advised to recite the following:

Come Butter, come,
Come Butter, come,
Peter stands at the Gate,
Waiting for a butter'd Cake,
Come Butter, come.

If this was said three times, the butter would appear!

Marvellous indeed were the legends and beliefs of the time. Barnacles, if broken from the bottom of the ships, turned into geese ; shellfish were said to grow on trees in Scotland ; dragons and dolphins of the most amiable kind, friendly to children and courteous to grown-ups, lived in Ethiopia and Macedonia.

Terrible was the glance of the basilisk, a venomous beast, which was a cock's egg hatched by a toad or serpent. The Elizabethans believed that the eyes of a dragon, if beaten into oil with honey, and made into ointment, were a magic charm, protecting the owner against evils of the night. Rheumatism, toothache, and such ills were said to be cured by weird concoctions of chopped mice, elephants' blood, lynx' claws, and elks' hoofs. These were all part of the paraphernalia inside the magic medicine chest of Merrie England.

Has Puck been banished the Kingdom? Will he never return to play his tricks on idle wenches? Fancy's airy realm has been sadly depopulated of

late years. Are we now too busy to open the magic casements through which can still be seen King Oberon seated in regal majesty on a mushroom, gently rebuking Robin Goodfellow? Bottom the weaver, in his ass's head, will he no more whisper a magic incantation for the cure of the toothache; dragons no longer sleep peacefully in the shade of an old oak on whose wrinkled trunk barnacles are waiting to be turned into geese?

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THE KINGDOM OF AUTOLYCUS

Let us take the road.
Hark! I hear the sound of coaches!
The hour of attack approaches,
T'your arms, brave boys, and load.

JOHN GAY, *The Beggar's Opera.*

EXCEPT for a brief visit to the boisterous follies of Bartholomew Fair, our pilgrimage through Merrie England has been confined to the country lanes, the village green, a glimpse of the festive revelry of the Baron in his hall, and the villager worshipping the invisible gods of the greenwood. Now, like Shakespeare, we must say "Farewell!" to the village and make for the town. Let us try to imagine

what a journey along the highway would be like in those eventful times.

The roads were, for the most part, little better than foul and haphazard tracks cut through the forests and the fields by the feet of travellers and the wheels of the carriers' carts. Never was travel so difficult as in Elizabethan times. England had cause to be proud of her pioneers, but they were so busy seeking El Dorado on the high seas that they had no time or energy to bestow on the almost equally arduous and risky adventure of travelling on the high road. In commerce and the arts, England was making mighty strides, but loud were the laments on the shocking state of the roads. Until 1555, when the law endeavoured to remedy the evil, road mending and making was nobody's business, and the highway remained, in winter, a dangerous and disgusting morass in which horses floundered and carts sank to their axles: in summer, treacherous, uneven, and wretched.

Though chroniclers of the time lamented the rapidity with which the forests were disappearing, there remained, nevertheless, huge tracts of woodland through which the roads meandered and where travellers spurred their horses so that they might reach the welcome lights and generous fare of the

inn before the last light of day had faded from the West. Robbers on the Queen's highway were not romantic heroes of legend, but monstrous ugly fellows, who were just as willing to kill as to plunder : the penalty was the same in either event. The gallows at the top of the hill, silhouetted against the dying light ; its corpse, swaying grotesquely in the wind, was an ominous reminder to the robber of the hazards of his craft, and to the travellers of the terrors that lurked by night.

These marauders rarely ventured alone, but plundered in bands. Certain districts were infested with them : Shooter's Hill, Gadshill—the scene of Falstaff's highway robbery—Hounslow, Newmarket Heath, and, in earlier times, the road from London to Winchester. Carriers, posts, priests and poets, knights and princes all rode on horse-back. The coach had appeared in London's streets, but it was a cumbrous, nerve-racking contraption, without springs, and, if it ventured out of town, it was ever in danger of sinking to a last resting-place in the deep ruts of clay or muddy swamps camouflaged with treacherous brushwood by careless villagers. Poorer folk sometimes travelled in the covered wagons of the carriers.

The highway was the home and happy hunting

Ambush

G. 1-2.

ground of an army of idle, shifty, cunning, and desperate vagabonds. Chapmen, jugglers, and ballad-mongers were the aristocrats of a profession which included Autolycus, happiest of rogues, and a host of scurvy felons who hacked their bodies most foully, the better to affright or excite the pity of passers-by and credulous villagers. The Elizabethan, unless he were a Devon or Cornish man and could put to sea without a deal of preliminary adventuring, preferred to stay at home. If business forced him to take to the road, then he travelled alert to the perils of both track and tricksters. At various intervals in the journey, when, for example, the miserable highway plunged into the black mouth of the forest, he would alight from his horse and mutter a prayer, before venturing on the unknown.

In the Middle Ages, however, people were not such stay-at-homes as may be imagined. Pilgrimages, a constant succession of wars, and the claims of commerce made travel frequent, and, indeed, the roads were then in better repair than in the time of Elizabeth. The Romans had built well, but nobody seems to have troubled to inquire into the secrets of their engineering. With the dissolution of the monasteries, the suppression of religion, and the gradual lessening of the authority of the Lords of the Manor, the upkeep

of the roads was ignored ; bridges crumbled and fell.

Such a dangerous state of affairs could not long be tolerated. Even in our time there is occasionally some little dispute as to which authority, County, Borough, or Parish Council, is responsible for the maintenance of roads. In the early days of Merrie England it was everybody's plan to wait until the other fellow did something or was drowned. In the middle of the sixteenth century, however, each person in the parish was compelled by law to do his bit in the repair of the roads. The statute (1555) insisted that each parish and everybody in it was to be held responsible for the cost, the tools, and work involved in maintaining the roads. The villagers had to choose from among themselves a Surveyor of Highways, an amateur, who was often guilty of paying too strict attention to the roads that led to his own pastures! Heavy penalties were imposed on defaulting villages and lazy surveyors.

Speaking of the Act of 1555 Harrison tells us that the people worked for six days in summer on the roads. Although the intention was good, the result was bad, for " the rich do so cancel their portions, and the poor so loiter in their labours, that of all the six, scarcely two good days' work are well performed." Instead of working on the important roads

leading from market to market, each surveyor repaired the by-plots and lanes most useful to him and his own business. " Besides this, such as have land along open sides of the ways, do utterly neglect to ditch and scour their drains and watercourses," the result being that the roads were more flooded than ever, and more dangerous to travellers.

Our highways were frankly condemned by Frederick, Duke of Würtemberg, who, in 1592, visited this country, and described the road from Cambridge to London as a " villainous bog and wild country." He and his party missed their way several times because the country was little better than a waste. In one spot the mud was so deep that the Duke believed it would be impossible to pass with a coach in winter or in rainy weather.

In 1607 complaints were made that wayfarers ignored the highway, preferring to trample down the corn on either side of the road, often destroying the fences, and occasionally cutting a new track to the great injury of some innocent farmer.

Winding across English meadows to-day are to be found lanes, little more than four feet wide, used by the horsemen of Elizabeth's time. These tortuous by-ways defy the hooting and screaming interlopers and remain one of the chief glories of the country-

side. They appeared without plan and method, little green ribbons, pursuing their devious way over hill and dale, bordered by hawthorn hedges, and only wide enough to carry a horse and its pack saddles.

Outlaws had preyed on wealthy tradesmen from before the time of Chaucer. That their exploits captured the imagination of the people is plain enough by the legend of Robin Hood, who, as we have seen, was invested with the powers of a deity and made the god of the greenwood. But we must be on our guard and not associate with the highways of Merrie England those bands of handsome, rosy-cheeked men who, with the manners of gallant knights of the Round Table, robbed fat drapers and selfish priors to help the poor. A great fire blazing in the heart of the forest, Robin Hood, with the smile of a cultured courtier, looking on whilst his men sang to the harp or listened to tales of chivalry, is a pretty picture, one that would be in complete accord with the spirit of Merrie England, but alas! we must not credit it.

In 1281 outlaws were classed with wolves as vermin. There is no reason to believe that they had improved to any great degree in the time of Elizabeth, when their depredations were so common and their

existence so taken for granted that a draper, who had been set upon by day, and robbed, was reproved for travelling alone and having his money in a wallet which he carried openly.

The village inn was welcome indeed. It offered both hospitality and protection. But even the inn was not free from danger. So wide were the ramifications of the highwayman, and so lucrative his trade, that tapsters and ostlers were often in league with him. By care and shrewdness, they could gauge the wealth of travellers, and by secret signs give their colleague of the night the information that would make worth while their famous cry "Halt! Your money or your life!"

The carrier was perhaps the most interesting of those whose lives were spent on the great high road. "He is the ordinary ambassador between friend and friend, the father and the son," wrote John Earle, in his *Micro-cosmographie*, written in 1628. "He is like the vault in Gloucester church that conveys whispers at a distance; for he takes the sound out of your mouth at York and makes it be heard as far as London. . . . He is a great afflicter of the highways, and beats them out of measure; which injury is sometimes revenged by the purse-taker, and then the voyage miscarries. No man domineers more in

his inn, nor calls his host unreverently with more presumption."

Shakespeare, in those famous scenes of the first part of Henry IV, has drawn for us lively pictures of the hazards of travel in Merrie England. The first scene is in an inn-yard at Rochester, and, from the talk that is going on, it is the very inn in which the robbers of Gadshill, together with their accomplices, the ostlers and grooms, hatched their plots. It is early morning and two carriers with lanterns in their hands are preparing for the day's journey. " I think this be the most villainous house in all London road for fleas : I am stung like a tench," says one of them, thus giving us briefly and eloquently a description of the accommodation provided by many an Elizabethan inn.

The carriers grow impatient. " What, ostler! come away and be hanged! " they cry. " I have a gammon of bacon and two razes of ginger to be delivered as far as Charing-Cross," explains one, while the other stamps with anger, " God's body! the turkeys in my pannier are quite starved. What, ostler! A plague on thee! Hast thou never an eye in thy head ? canst not hear ? An 'twere not as good deed as drink, to break the pate on thee, I am a very villain. Come, and be hanged! "

But the blasphemous shouts do not fetch the lazy ostler. There appears in the stable-yard instead no other than Master Gadshill, one of Falstaff's rogues, and one very familiar with the practices of the highway. The carriers, however, are not such innocents as to be caught by the tricks of a night-robber.

Gadshill : Good morrow, carriers. What's o'clock ?

First Carrier : I think it be two o'clock.

Gadshill : I prithee, lend me thy lantern, to see my gelding in the stable.

First Carrier : Nay, by God, soft : I know a trick worth two of that, i' faith.

Gadshill : I pray thee, lend me thine.

Second Carrier : Ay, when ? canst tell ? Lend me thy lantern, quoth he ? marry, I'll see thee hanged first.

Gadshill : Sirrah, carrier, what time do you mean to come to London ?

Second Carrier : Time enough to go to bed with a candle, I warrant thee. Come, neighbour Mugs, we'll call up the gentlemen : they will along with company, for they have great charge.

Immediately the carriers have left, Gadshill calls for the inn chamberlain, who tells the rogue where good plunder is to be found. In fact, the chamberlain, as Shakespeare portrays him, is the worse evil of the two, for it is he who lays the plot.

" Good morrow, Master Gadshill," says the chamberlain. " It holds current that I told you yesternight : there's a franklin in the wild of Kent

hath brought three hundred marks with him in gold : I heard him tell it to one of his company last night at supper : a kind of auditor : one that hath abundance of charge too, God knows what."

Thus the highway robbery is planned. After some pleasantries in which the gallows figure somewhat conspicuously, Gadshill says : " Give me thy hand : thou shalt have a share in our purchase, as I am a true man," to which the chamberlain dryly responds, " Nay, rather let me have it, as you are a false thief."

The highway near Gadshill, Rochester, haunted the imaginations of nervous travellers. On that notorious hill many well-freighted horsemen on their way from the coast to London delivered up their riches and were thankful if they escaped without worse hurt.

In Shakespeare's picture of a highway robbery near Rochester, Falstaff and his gang—Bardolph, Peto, Poins, and Gadshill—were the principal actors. The robbery was arranged as a diversion for the gay Prince, who was a willing accomplice. We are shown the fat rogue, who is busy wrangling, when the Prince suddenly cuts short the squabble.

" Peace, ye fat-guts, lie down : lay thine ear close to the ground and list if thou canst hear the tread of travellers," cries the Prince. Bardolph, on the alert

for the unhappy wayfarers, is the first to warn the robbers of the approach of plunder. "On with your vizards," he urges. "There's money of the king's coming down the hill: 'tis going to the king's exchequer."

The Prince, practical, efficient, and autocratic, even in this piece of fool's play, gives the orders for the robbery. "Sirs, you four shall front them in the narrow lane: Ned Poins and I will walk lower: if they 'scape from your encounter, then they light on us."

"How many be there of them?" asks Peto. "Some eight or ten," replies Gadshill, who, as we have seen, had his information from the spy in the Rochester Inn.

On come the unsuspecting travellers, whilst Falstaff and his forces arrange themselves for the attack. Just as he draws abreast of the highwaymen, the first traveller says to his companion, "Come, neighbour: the boy shall lead our horses down the hill: we'll walk afoot awhile and ease our legs." At this point, the thieves burst in upon them with a fierce "Stand!"

"Jesus bless us!" cry the trembling travellers, who, although they assure Falstaff that they are grand jurors, are robbed and bound.

The rogues and vagabonds of Elizabethan times were particularly repulsive. There were many orders and grades: from the sweet-voiced, well-dressed knave who lurked in the city streets, often the spokesman of a band of hidden cut-throats ready to attack at a sign from him, quick to prey on the sympathies of unsuspecting youths from the provinces or universities; to the wretches who bruised their own bodies and showed their sores for gain.

Harrison had a manly contempt for these vagabonds "that will abide nowhere," and "who continue stark thieves till the gallows do eat them up." He tells us that they would apply corrosives to their bodies, raise "pitiful and odious sores" by means of ratsbane, spearwort, and crowfoot, to move the hearts of the passers-by.

The great army of rogues was judged by Harrison to amount to over ten thousand. Clever, cunning actors, they would sometimes pretend to be serving men or labourers, sometimes mariners, "seeking for ships which they never lost." Moreover, these "caterpillars in the commonwealth" had devised a language, called "Canting," or "Pedlar's French," which was intelligible only to themselves.

Thomas Harman, who in 1567 carefully investigated the secrets and habits of the rogues of the high-

way, divided them into twenty-three classes, including Rufflers, Uprightmen, Hookers or Anglers, Palliards, Abrams, Freshwater Mariners, Drunken Tinkers, Doxies and Dells.

The Palliard covered some part of his body with artificial sores, and, if necessary, fell foaming at the mouth (an exhibition rendered possible by the chewing of soap) before the passer-by, in order to excite his pity. Abram pretended to be mad, and, with tattered and scanty clothes, wandered up and down the country roads, a very scarecrow of a man, his resting-place the village stocks or pillory. Shakespeare has painted a vivid portrait of this fearful personage in *King Lear*:

> My face I'll grime with filth,
> Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,
> And with presented nakedness out-face
> The winds and persecutions of the sky.
> The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
> And with this horrible object, from low farms,
> Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
> Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
> Enforce their charity.

The Angler was a less despicable fellow, sworn cousin to Autolycus: he fished the housewives' linen

from the hedge, using a hooked pole. Head of this ragged crew of vagabonds were the Uprightmen, strong of limb and quick of wit, who ruled the inferior ranks with the command of kings, and preyed on them when times were bad.

These were some of the rogues that a wayfarer of Merrie England might encounter in the course of a day's journey. Dusty, shuffling, cringing, or truculent, they would beg or steal their idle way through life. It is certain that on any considerable journey, the traveller would come across one or other of the band of wanderers : pedlars, palmists, fortune-tellers, fencers, players, minstrels, jugglers, tinkers, mock-scholars, physiognomists, all those " such as gad about the country," without purpose, and all classed as rogues and idle persons by the industrious Harrison.

Shakespeare's Autolycus, that " snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," was surely the gayest, the most delightful of this motley brotherhood. He was more a creature of the imagination than fact : the rogue idealised, the merchant of mischief inhabiting a land of legend, or that land of laughter and health and hearty friendliness that we have called Merrie England. But we may be sure that there were rogues anxious to keep on the right side of the gallows

whose wits were constantly employed, and who may, by the entertainment they gave, be said to have earned their keep. Such a one was Autolycus. He was no valorous rogue: "Gallows and knock are too powerful on the highway; beating and hanging are terrors to me; for the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it." Silly, half-witted villagers, were his "revenue"; a merry heart, his philosophy, and "the white sheet bleaching on the hedge," his prey.

A country clown was no match for this Robin Goodfellow of roguery. See how cunningly he counterfeits when he comes across a silly fellow who has been sent to buy fruits and spices for the sheep-shearing feast.

Autolycus: O that ever I was born! (*Grovelling on the ground.*)

Clown: I' the name of me——

Autolycus: O, help me, help me! pluck but off these rags: and then, death, death!

Clown: Alack, poor soul! thou hast need of more rags to lay on thee, rather than have these off.

Autolycus: O sir, the loathsomeness of them offends me more than the stripes I have received, which are mighty ones and millions.

Autolycus then pleads that he has been robbed and beaten, his clothes and money taken from him.

The country fellow believes his tale and is sorely touched by the picture of the wronged Autolycus. "Lend me thy hand, I'll help thee: come, lend me thy hand," he says, and gently helps the rogue on to his feet.

Autolycus: O, good sir, tenderly O!
Clown: Alas, poor soul!
Autolycus: O, good sir, softly, sir! I fear, sir, my shoulder-blade is out.
Clown: How now! Canst stand?
Autolycus: Softly, dear sir (*picks his pocket*): good sir, softly. You ha' done me a charitable office.

Autolycus gives a brief description of the imaginary person who had robbed him: he is no other than Autolycus himself. The wretch was first a servant at court, then an ape-bearer, a process-server, a bailiff, a frequenter of fairs, where (probably at Bartholomew Fair) he produced a puppet show play of the Prodigal Son, married a tinker's wife "and, having flown over many knavish professions, he settled only in rogue." Such was the history of at least one of the vagabonds whose kingdom was the highway

If we accompanied the unhappy grand jurors, who were robbed by Falstaff at Gadshill on their journey to London, entering the city by the old London Bridge, we should find, in Southwark, a cluster of

black and white houses with overhanging gables and rusty brown mottled roofs, bordering the unpaved highway. There were in those days well-tree'd gardens in Southwark, and green fields on the south bank of the Thames. As our unfortunate travellers drew near to London Bridge they would see the heads of a score or so traitors mounted on long poles overhanging the Tower gateway.

London Bridge was, in Elizabeth's time, somewhat shaky and decrepit, but still one of the chief architectural glories of the city. It was designed by a curate, was built on enormous piles closely wedged together, and had nineteen arches. The houses built upon it overhung the river, and seemed to be in ever-imminent danger of toppling into the water. Occasionally the floor did give way, and an unsuspecting household would be flung into the water that had bubbled, groaned and hissed about their dwelling-place.

This famous bridge, which saw so many centuries of history, disappeared only a hundred years ago. It was said to have been "built upon woolpacks," and many took the saying literally. But the "woolpacks" were those which were taxed to provide the funds for the bridge's erection. It was built in 1176 and the Reverend builder, Peter of St. Mary Colechurch, was buried in the crypt of one of the piers.

"I well remember," wrote Thomas Pennant in 1790, "the street of London Bridge, narrow, darksome and dangerous to passengers from the multitude of carriages: frequent arches of strong timber crossed the street, from the tops of the houses, to keep them together and from falling into the water. Nothing but use could preserve the rest of the inmates, who soon grew indifferent to the noise of the falling waters, clamours of water men, or the frequent shrieks of drowning wretches." Through this gloomy bridge of houses our weary and humiliated travellers would at last find shelter in London.

Bedlam Beggars.

"THE WARMEST WELCOME"

The first speech in my *Cataline*, spoken by Sylla's ghost, was writ after I parted with my friends at the Devil's Tavern: I had drank well that night, and had brave notions. There is one scene in that play which I think is flat—I resolve to drink no more water in my wine.

BEN JONSON.

"YES, sir, the very bed that Queen Elizabeth slept in! Fine woman, Queen Elizabeth, sir: a sport, if ever there was one!" What a restless woman was Queen Bess! Many a traveller in his wanderings through the countryside of England has laid his head on the very pillow that legend has

associated with the travels of the Queen. But Elizabeth was not content with anything short of efficiency. The four-poster bed whose pillars are decorated with such cunning devices is a thing of joy to a traveller of to-day, but when mine host of Merrie England bowed his royal guest to her chamber, he would tremble with anxiety until he heard, from one of her suite, that all was well.

What a scurrying and panic, what shouting and protestations there would be, if Her Majesty found fault with the inn! She had been known to slap the poor boots, and to complain of the quality of the ale. In an age when Englishmen boasted that they could drink more in two hours than a Dutchman or a Dane in twenty-four, their Queen set a vigorous example. On one of the Queen's visits to Hatfield, the Earl of Leicester wrote to Lord Burleigh : " There is not one drop of good drink for her there. We were fain to send to London and Kenilworth and divers other places where ale was : her own beer was so strong as there was no man able to drink it."

But what a jovial and warm-hearted welcome awaited the traveller of Merrie England! As his horse clattered up to the mounting-block of the inn, the host himself in spotless apron, his face beaming with health and friendliness would greet the mud-stained

traveller whilst ostler and chamberlain would run to assist : the one would lead the horse to the wide and busy stable-yard, the other conduct the guest to the lavender-scented chamber. From the lattice window the traveller would catch the fragrance of the bountifully stocked fruit garden.

The architecture of England's inns expressed the poetry of welcome. The oak panels, deep bays, and cavernous stone fireplace, on which the wood fire crackled and danced with joy, were a rich reward for the hazards of the journey. Why, the very chimney stacks of an Elizabethan inn clustered together in gossipy friendliness! The roof was broken by many a peeping gable and the oak beams were knuckled, twisted, and bent, like an old weather-beaten sailor.

The well-born English traveller looked to mine host to serve him well and expeditiously. The traveller's own forefathers had set the fashion in hospitality and created a reputation which made England the envy of her foreign guests.

In the Middle Ages, the monasteries and the houses of the great were thrown open to travellers. Men of quality dined with the Lord and shared his chamber for the night : lesser folk dined at the bottom end of the table and, their meal over, stretched themselves upon the rush-strewn floor and slept.

Travellers, in early times, recognised the family name from the arms carved in stone in some conspicuous place on the outer walls of the nobleman's hall. When mine host furnished his inn what better than imitate the arms of the lord of the manor, whose hospitality was well known? He wished to honour his distinguished neighbour and, at the same time, to cry "Welcome!" to all who passed by. Being unskilled in the subtleties of heraldry, he copied the lion on the coat-of-arms, painted it red, and henceforth his house would be known as "The Red Lion." Perchance, he stole the baron's dragon, and thus evolved "The Green Dragon."

The inns of Merrie England were the most comfortable, the most hospitable, and the best stocked in the world. No wonder the traveller's eye brightened as he saw the cheerful inn lights blinking in the distance; the inn was a second home to the English traveller. The stable-hands may have been in league with cut-purses and outlaws, but mine host himself was surety for the traveller, so long as he remained under the roof of the inn. When Chaucer's pilgrims set out from the Tabard in Southwark for Canterbury, inns were not such homely and efficient calling places as they became a century or two later. In Chaucer's time the floor of the traveller's bed-

chamber was strewn with rushes, in which fleas found a goodly haven, and only the most imposing inns, such as the Tabard itself, could afford the luxury of glass in the diamond-shaped frames. Shakespeare would have us believe that the carriers who called at Rochester complained that they were most evilly bitten, and Pepys, a hundred years later, laughed heartily when he found a louse in the inn bed. But these were uncommon experiences to the wealthy traveller of Merrie England. The inns were clean, welcoming, and capable of the most remarkable feats of catering.

The inns of the larger towns on the busy highways were described by Harrison as great and sumptuous. Every man could use his inn as his own house, and paid fare and accommodation according to his pocket. "Our inns are also very well furnished with napery, bedding and tapestry; especially with napery, for beside the linen used at the tables, which is commonly washed daily . . . each comer is sure to lie in clean sheets wherein no man hath been lodged since they came from the laundress, or out of the water wherein they were last washed." Harrison, indeed, was never so enthusiastic as in describing the virtues of an English inn.

If the patron travelled by horse, his bed cost him

nothing, but if he travelled on foot, he paid a penny. Whether horseman or footman, when once he was shown to his chamber, he carried his own key, and used the room just as he might use a room of his own house.

If during his stay at the inn he lost any of his goods, then the host would meet the loss. A traveller was more secure at his inn than anywhere else in England. Horses were well fed and stabled, especially if the owners kept a shrewd eye upon the ostlers and grooms, who, however, were not as free from guile as the innkeeper, "for," says Harrison, "many an honest man is spoiled of his goods as he travelleth to and fro." The tapsters and chamberlains were often in league with outlaws. So much so, in fact, that Harrison was of the opinion that there was not a chapman or traveller robbed by the wayside, unless some inn servant were concerned.

When the traveller arrived at the inn and alighted from his horse, the ostler, apparently eager to help, would cunningly estimate the worth of the traveller's wallet. If he failed, then the chamberlain, that is the servant of the bed-chamber, would, under some pretext, move the wallet and learn what his colleague had failed to discover. Thus many an honest yeoman was undone. Should these two crafty fellows fail,

then the tapster, when drawing the ale, would watch his man and easily decide whether he was worth the attention of the highwaymen. A traveller was never robbed in an inn. Some, thinking to make their property quite safe, would hand over their precious wallet to the host on arriving at their inn. This, however, was a foolish move, for the outlaws' confederates at once realised that a wallet worth such safeguard was good plunder.

The largest inns of Merrie England were capable of accommodating two or three hundred guests, who were well provided with ale, beer and various wines. At very short notice, excellent and substantial meals were provided, and though the worst inns of England were to be found in London, yet many of these far excelled the best inns of other countries. "It is a world to see how each owner of them contendeth with the other for goodness of entertainment of their guests, as about fineness and change of linen, furniture of bed, beauty of room, service at the table, costliness of plate, strength of drink, variety of wines, of well-using of horses," said Harrison.

Tributes to the luxury and efficiency of the English inn were many. There was not a place in the world where travellers could command so freely, or

were attended so well. Nowhere in the world were inns so beautifully furnished.

We must remember that it was the inn-yard with its surrounding galleries which was the open-air stage of strolling players and musicians, which gave the builders of the first English theatres their model. The Globe, built on the south side of the Thames, the famous theatre so intimately associated with Shakespeare, was little more than a high round wall, the enclosure of which was open to the sun, and whose galleries closely resembled the interior of such an inn as the Tabard.

Inn signs were the finest that wealth and ingenuity could devise. Harrison commented with disfavour on the magnificence of inn-signs, some of which cost in those days, thirty or forty pounds. The inn-sign, however, was mine host's salutation to the world of wayfarers, and he could not afford to hide his virtues, when his neighbour was loudly proclaiming his, assisted perhaps by beautiful designs in beaten iron-work of such quality that only the best craftsmen could provide.

The inn sign-board was a very important guide to the Londoner of Merrie England. Few of the people could read or write, but they understood the meaning of a sign-board. The first general sign for an inn was

a pole, at the end of which hung a bunch of evergreens, indicating that wine was sold in the house. These "ale stakes" as they were called, projected far into the street, and were often so heavy that they formed a real danger to the structure of the building to which they were attached. In the fifteenth century the length of the pole was limited to seven feet. There were, of course, signs for every trade: the cutler advertised his wares by hanging a knife above his shop door; the hosier, a stocking; the tailor, scissors; but later it was necessary to add subtlety to these simple devices, and there was great competition between tradesmen and merchants. As the weather soon damaged a painted device, the chief effort was made in a brilliant ironwork ornamentation, some of which has been preserved, and is a tribute to the finest craftsmanship of the time.

The traveller of Merrie England, passing through London's narrow, evil-smelling streets, would find the light of day obscured by mammoth signs: frying-pans, tea-pots, tea-canisters, and clogs.

An observant traveller of the time of James I recorded the signs of the taverns he passed when walking from Charing Cross to the Tower of London. The names are familiar enough to-day, showing that here, at any rate, history has repeated itself. "On

the way from Whitehall to Charing Cross we pass: the White Hart, the Red Lion, the Mermaid, the Three Tunnes, Salutation, the Greyhound, the Bell, the Golden Lion. In sight of Charing Cross; the Garter, the Crown, the Bear and Ragged Staff, the Angel, the King Harry Head. Then from Charing Cross towards the city: another White Hart, the Eagle and Child, the Helmet, the Swan, the Bell, King Harry Head, the Flower-de-luce, Angel, the Holy Lamb, the Bear and Harroe, the Plough, the Ship, the Black Bell, another King Harry Head, the Bull Head, the Golden Bull, 'a sixpenny ordinary,' another Flower-de-luce, the Red Lion, the Horns, the White Horse, the Prince's Arms, Bell Savadge's Inn, the St. John the Baptist, the Talbot, the Ship of War, the St. Dunstan, the Hercules or the Old Man Tavern, the Mitre, another Three Tunnes Inn and a Three Tunnes Tavern, a Greyhound, another Mitre, another King Harry Head, Three Tunnes, and the Three Cranes."

The inn-keeper was forced by law to use a sign-board, and Charles I granted to other citizens the same right, "for the better finding out such citizen's dwellings, shops, arts or occupations, without impediment, molestation, or interruption of his heirs or successors."

Sign-boards constituted a real menace to the Londoner. In *The History of Sign Boards* the authors give a dismal picture of London streets. "We can picture to ourselves the unfortunate plumed, feathered, silken gallant of the period (the time of Pepys), walking, in his low shoes and silk stockings, through the ill-paved dirty streets, on a stormy November day, when the honours were equally divided between fog, sleet, snow and rain (and no umbrellas, be it remembered), with flower-pots blown from the pent-houses, spouts sending down shower-baths from almost every house, and the streaming signs swinging over-head on their rusty, creaking hinges."

So great was the danger and discomfiture resulting from the mighty host of sign-boards that Charles II found it necessary to order that no sign-boards should be hung across the streets, but must be fixed against balconies, or some other convenient part of the side of the house.

It is good to know that in Merrie England, when the people were thoroughly alive, too happy living to talk about the joy of life, too busy both at work and play to stop to philosophise, that the inn, the traveller's haven, embodied in its service all the finest qualities of the time. Its neighbour, the Church, the

safeguard of England's soul, was sufficiently aware of the pleasures of the body to encourage—to over-encourage, said some—the joys to be found in drinking.

True, there were a few doleful spirits who lamented the Church's part in Whitsun-ales, Wakes, and Church-ales, but to the great mass of folk, Church and inn were neighbours in the most friendly harmony. A man sang his psalms all the more lustily, and not any the less reverently, for the fact that, on the previous night he had supped long and heartily of well-brewed ale. "While the Englishman drank ale," said a French doctor writing in 1620, "they were strong, brawny, and able men, and could draw an arrow an ell long : but when they fell to wine and beer, they were found to be impaired in their strength and age."

Let us then pay tribute to the inn, which was, wrote John Earle, "the busy man's recreation, the idle man's business, the melancholy man's sanctuary, the stranger's welcome, the inns-a-court man's entertainment, the scholar's kindness, and the citizen's courtesy."

But what of the shifty bands of rogues and vagabonds that haunted the highways? Where did they find their welcome? There were notorious houses

well-known as the resorts of these idle wretches. In these "barns and back-houses" every conceivable evil practice was rife. The unwilling host and hostess were forced to admit them and give them a grudging welcome, for they were not to be trifled with. Forty Uprightmen, those autocrats of the hedge-rows, were accommodated in one such hostel. Should they suspect any double-dealing on the part of the host, then they would wait their opportunity, a shot would ring out one evening, or the house would be burnt down while the host and his servants slept.

London was not so well served with inns. The traveller, unless he were a roysterer and shared Falstaff's enthusiasm for sack and sugar, would be glad to find himself on the high-road, making his way back to the village. The tavern of London town was the city man's club, the meeting place both of wits and wasters. One such tavern is the most famous of all: the "Mermaid," in Bread Street. There met Shakespeare, Ben Jonson—who we may be assured was the chairman of the assembly, and talked Shakespeare down at every opportunity—Beaumont and Fletcher and Raleigh.

Thus wrote Beaumont to Ben Jonson:

> What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been

So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whom they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in jest.

Other famous hostelries were "The Mitre" in Cheapside, "The Red Lion" in the Strand, and, of course, "The Boar's Head" in Eastcheap, the setting of Shakespeare's greatest comic hero, and the world's most conscientious drinker. It would be unfair to pass on without saluting the great Falstaff, for he dominates one part of Merrie England, as Robin Goodfellow presides over the other. Falstaff, the town and tavern: Robin, the cottage and countryside. Falstaff embodies the laughter, the wit, and devil-may-care revelry of the Elizabethan ale-house; he is the most substantial shadow in literature, the soul of laughter, and his grossness was transmuted by genius into elfin gold. This gay old sinner was sent to war, robbed on the highway, was sternly rebuked by a Lord Chief Justice, and most cruelly deserted by a King whose faithful jester he had been, but he managed nevertheless to die in bed, babbling of green fields.

Queen Elizabeth, as we can well imagine, was fascinated by the old reprobate as he appeared in *Henry IV* and, so the story goes, persuaded Shakespeare to bring him to life again. But the fat, cheer-

ful, silly old man of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not Falstaff. He calls himself Falstaff, but he is not the creature of sack, sugar, and sagacity, the very monarch of misrule, of Shakespeare's first invention.

This old man is masquerading in borrowed doublet, a mere mimic of the real Falstaff. Even Shakespeare could not create a Falstaff at command. That mountain of flesh and folly was inspired. Never were weight and wit so well matched. Merrie England owes much to him. He is the patron saint of holiday, the king of the tavern.

The Boar's Head, in Eastcheap, was a merry place where princes fooled with tapsters and Falstaff often spent his idle moments making love to the hostess or borrowing from her. But even Falstaff was not safe in his favourite inn: "Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn, but I shall have my pocket picked?" he asked, and all the world knows of the famous bill that was found upon him by his companions in mischief:

Item, a capon.	2s. 2d.
Item, Sauce.	4d.
Item, Sack, two gallons.	5s. 8d.
Item, Anchovies and Sack after supper.	2s. 6d.
Item, Bread.	*ob.*

"O monstrous! but one half-pennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!" cried Prince Henry, and no doubt there were many in London who shared

Falstaff's reputation. Brawling and licentiousness were common enough, and the city sheriff and his watch kept a vigilant eye on certain notorious taverns.

There were sluts and roysterers and worse in the taverns of Billingsgate, in one of which the city cut-purses were encouraged to meet and teach the mysteries of their craft to the rising generation. Here, writes Stow, was "a school-house set up, to learn young boys to cut purses."

They were great drinkers, the poets and authors of Merrie England, and none more gifted with capacity than burly Ben Jonson. He was a rare tavern man, and attributed to the magic of wine his own successes. Mr. F. W. Hackwood, in *Inns, Ales, and Drinking Customs of Old England*, quotes an old manuscript of Jonson's which is now lying in Dulwich College. "I laid the plot of my *Volpone*," so runs the manuscript, "and wrote most of it, after a present of ten dozen of palm sack from my very good Lord T——; that play I am positive will last to posterity and be acted when I and envy be friends, with applause."

By good fortune, the traveller of to-day may measure for himself the hospitality offered to his fellow of three centuries ago. The "Feathers" Inn of

Ludlow, with its black beams ; the famous "George" at Glastonbury, an inn built in the fifteenth century, probably as the pilgrim's house for the monastery, and whose Gothic front, solid and beautiful as a cathedral, friendly as a cheery monk, is a tribute to the ancient harmony of Church and tavern : at Grantham and Gloucester, Salisbury and Southampton, Canterbury and York, there also remain venerable inns, whose courtyards once rang with the cries of the postillions and the rumble of the carriers' wagons.

A LONDON DAY

A place both for the beauty of building, infinite riches, variety of all things, that excelleth all the cities in the world, insomuch that it may be called the storehouse and mart of all Europe.

JOHN LYLY.

EIGHT o'clock in the morning in Shakespeare's London, the London of Merrie England. It is a festival day. The great gateways in the city wall are gay with colour ; triumphal arches, designed by the most skilful artists of the day and carried out by the most cunning workmen, are erected at suitable places ; great wooden platforms are set up for those

citizens who will not be taking part in the pageant. All is bustle, noise, and stir. The 'prentices are hurrying in and out of the narrow shops, fixing their masters' stalls in the open street. London is early astir and unusually noisy, for to-night is the midsummer festival of the watch, the citizen's own holiday, when quarrels are forgotten, rivalry gives place to amity, and Londoners pay their respects to the city whose glory they share. London's supremacy is acknowledged by all. No provincial city questions her pomp and splendour. Noblemen and poets, craftsmen and ne'er-do-wells, all turn to the great city, whose fame is now sounded throughout the known world. Not Athens nor Rome in all their glory could rival her life, her wit, her adventurous courage. Shakespeare and Raleigh, Drake and the Queen herself are figures cast in a heroic mould, worthy to tread the stage of Elizabethan London. In the arts of war and peace, England is supreme. London, packed within its ancient walls and beginning its attack on the surrounding country-side, is a citadel worthy of the time.

The narrow streets are packed with a bustling, cheerful, cosmopolitan crowd. So great is the pressure of the people that posts are erected especially to protect the houses. Coaches are the latest novelty,

but they have become popular so quickly that they are already a serious rival to the great army of watermen, those burly fellows who for generations have ruled the crystal waters of the Thames. They are the taxi-men of their time, but they are beginning to fear the lumbering interlopers that splash their way through the narrow streets, indifferent to the angry citizens who crouch beneath the overhanging shops and take advantage of every alley and doorway. Drays, carts, and coaches are a serious menace to the safety of the people. No succeeding generation has faced a road problem so pressing and dangerous. These narrow, dark streets, piled with refuse and shrunken by the tradesmen's booths, are no fit place for wild or careless drivers. "The coachman rides behind the horse tails, lasheth them, and looketh not behind him: the drayman sitteth and sleepeth on his dray, and letteth his horse lead him home," says Stow who walked those very streets.

Carts shod with iron are forbidden by law to enter the streets: the leading horse of every carriage should be led by hand, but these orders are ignored. The world runs on wheels and great is the dismay of the Thames waterman, although perhaps a more approachable fellow than Sir Thomas Overbury would have us believe. Sir Thomas, writing in 1614,

says the waterman is a great gossip, a teller of strange news, most commonly lies. He bawls and mutinies, and is most surly when his passengers tender their fare.

The theatres, on the south side of the Thames, are a fruitful source of work and income. All stage plays are given in the afternoon ; thus the waterman is kept busy plying to and from the many landing stages of Westminster and London.

A stranger, whose day we are to share, entering the city from the south, stands amazed by the fearful noise of the river, seething angrily round the " sterlings " of London Bridge. These " sterlings " are timbered platforms built around the stone arches to protect them. They check the flow of the river and narrow the channel, so that when they combat the full force of the tide, swirling, eddying cataracts are formed under each archway. Only the most skilful waterman can shoot the falls at London Bridge. Many a sporting gallant has lost his life in the attempt.

The shops on London Bridge are famous, for they are the headquarters of the cleverest barbers in the world. What powdering, perfuming, cutting and clipping goes on in the shadows of this street built on the water! Of course, the barber is a surgeon too : not a very skilful surgeon, but as a relief to the

monotony of twisting and curling a nobleman's beard, he will pull a tooth.

Once in the city proper, our traveller wonders greatly at the Babel around him. Ballad-singers, the clapper of the beggars, the noisy blasphemous crowd, the confusing cries of the street venders: "What d'ye lack? Hot Peas?" the shouts of the water-bearers, known to their patrons as "cobs," the beating of the hammers as the craftsmen carry on their trades in the open street, the laughter and clinking of pots from the taverns, and the noisy importunity of the chapmen, all make up a riot of sound that amazes our traveller, and would have astonished a Londoner of to-day could he transform himself into the doublet of his Elizabethan ancestor. . . .

Could the traveller have taken a bird's eye view of the city, he would, as distance certainly lent enchantment to the London of Shakespeare's time, have marvelled at the beauty of the setting. Old St. Paul's dominated the innumerable lesser spires like a king enthroned amongst his courtiers. The Gothic dignity of the huge cathedral was shown to advantage, for it was separated from the flotsam of houses and shops about its feet by a large churchyard. London was then confined between its stern, battlemented city walls. Aldgate in the east, Bishopsgate,

Moorgate, and Cripplegate, in the north, and Aldersgate, Newgate, and Ludgate, in the west, were the gateways to the principal highways. These gates were protected by massive towers and closed by portcullises. The Tower of London—then used as a fortress, a prison, a mint, an armoury, the treasury of the Crown jewels, and a record house—formed the eastern extremity to the wall, which, in the west, ended at Blackfriars.

Most of the city was jumbled within the walls, but houses were beginning to encroach on the country in the north, and lined the road to Islington, then a village, separated from London by fields and pasture land. Hampstead's windmills crowned the horizon in the north, Charing Cross was still a village, almost untouched by the rapidly growing cities of London and Westminster.

The Queen, whose palace at Whitehall covered a large part of the Thames bank at Westminster, hunted in Hyde Park and Marylebone—soon, however, to become a haunt of rogues and thieves. Gerard, the famous gardener of Merrie England, tended his plants in his garden at Holborn, and, a hundred years later, as Macaulay reminds us, the woodcock was hunted in the fields and hedgerows where Regent Street now stands.

Noblemen's houses were built on the slopes which ran down from the Strand to the river. Their gardens, lining the Thames, made a pretty scene. The Strand was a wretchedly cobbled road, chiefly used by the servants and stablemen of the great houses.

Within the city walls, the Thames side was broken by many wharves: outside the walls were innumerable landing stages, both public and private. Billingsgate was the chief landing place for fish, corn, and fruit.

The Thames was the glory of all beholders: a silver, clear, sweet-flowing stream, much wider than it is to-day. It was rippled by the oars of hundreds of watermen's boats. Swans added their stately majesty to the river's pageantry. The magnificent barges of the Queen, the Lord Mayor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the great Livery Companies lay at anchor, their gilded sides shining in the midsummer sun. Those coming down to the water's edge, anxious to be rowed up or down stream, to Westminster or the City, would cry to the watermen "Eastward Ho!" or "Westward Ho!" and away the little craft would glide. The Thames was, said Donald Lupton, writing in 1632, "the glory and wealth of the city, the highway to the sea, the bringer in of wealth and strangers. . . . He is a little sea, and a great river."

More beautiful than Venice, the Thames of Merrie England was bordered by palaces, many of whose imposing stone walls were washed by the river. Pageants and water jousts were held upon it and the salmon had not yet deserted it.

No wonder the Elizabethans were proud of their river, for it offered contrast indeed to the insanitary, badly planned, garbage-bestrewn streets. The authorities were becoming anxious, for the gardens and open spaces were rapidly crumbling before the onslaught of the builder. Slums were being born and certain districts were already notorious as the crowded haunts of thieves and cut-throats. Elizabeth tried to check the growth of the city by ordering that no house was to be built on any of the city's open spaces or on an unoccupied site within three miles of the city.

There was no method of disposing of rubbish, which accumulated in filthy, evil-smelling heaps outside the doors of the houses. At intervals, bonfires were made, but the scavenger's task was usually left to the disreputable army of homeless and ownerless dogs, which roamed about feeding here and there among the decaying heaps of rubbish.

Fynes Moryson in his *Itinerary*, written in 1617, tells us that the citizens' houses were built five or six roofs high of timber, clay and plaster, and were very

narrow in the front where they faced the street. Within they were neat and comfortable. Not only were there stately palaces on the Thames, but scattered up and down the city, many of them hidden in back lanes or behind the tradesmen's shops, were great houses, "which," says Moryson, "had they been shown to advantage, would have rivalled the best houses of any city in the world."

The tradesman was given first place in Merrie England. The nation of shopkeepers was being born! London's beauty was then, as now, not disclosed at the first view, but cunningly tucked away so that they who loved the city served a long apprenticeship: only by careful search was its true splendour revealed, and much of that was destined to perish in the great fire. The houses of the rich were being built of stone or brick. Homby, built by Sir Christopher Hatton; Tybals, the property of the Earl of Salisbury, and the Earl of Exeter's house near Stamford were famous showplaces. Royal palaces at Hampton Court, Richmond, Greenwich, Sheen, Windsor, and Whitehall were so magnificently designed, such exquisite examples of leisurely and cunning craftsmanship, their gardens were so delightful, so generously served with fountains that England did not fear the best that other countries could show, but boasted

the cleverest carpenters and builders in the world.

But we must return to London to see how our bewildered traveller is faring. He has wandered up and down Fleet Street, marvelling at the curiosity of the Londoners, who find pleasure in such strange monsters as were there exhibited. Fleet Street was the city's wonder show. Our traveller was much more impressed when, on reaching the stone tower of the water conduit, which supplied the inhabitants of Fleet Street with clean, fresh water, he heard St. Christopher and his angels play a hymn tune on the bells that were placed before them. This stone tower, with its statues and ingenious mechanism for the playing of the bells, was erected in 1478.

After spending some time turning over the pages of the books on the stalls in St. Paul's churchyard, the stranger became aware of a confused noise, a buzzing and humming, such as one might expect to hear issuing from a busy market hall. He made his way to the cathedral doors and saw the most motley assembly of men that could be imagined, loitering under the Gothic archway. Could it be some great religious feast? Surely not, for this crew of moth-eaten scamps, swaggering gallants, and noisy urchins was plainly not bent on the reformation of its souls. Dare he venture within? The traveller seriously debated

the matter, for he had heard that Londoners were a proud family, a race apart, which quickly drew strangers into dispute, or preyed on the innocence of country cousins. But before he had decided the point he found himself caught up by a noisy stream of men and shouldered and pressed into the great vaulted cathedral. What a confusion, a fearful shouting, a very Babel!

St. Paul's is the great gossip centre of the town. It is the meeting place of ruffians and roysterers ; the sanctuary for beggars and bankrupts. Lawyers take up their stand by the great Gothic pillars and interview prospective clients. Every kind of business transaction is carried on, the tops of the tombs being used as counters for the exchange of money and goods. Bread, fish, and fruit are sold within, and tailors, anxious to be abreast of the latest fashion, dart here and there, noting the novelties in the dress of the wealthy gossip-mongers. Pickpockets thrive. Hungry vagabonds, bereft of all but wit, contrive to get themselves invited to a meal in a neighbouring tavern. The usurer, " coughing at every step as if he were broken-winded," haunts the aisles, certain of custom.

" Paul's Walk is the land's epitome," wrote John Earle, in 1628. " It is more than this, the whole world's map, which you may here discern in its per-

fectest motion, jostling and turning. . . . It is the great exchange of all discourse, and no business whatsoever but is here stirring and afoot."

Here politics are discussed with far more heat and intensity than in Parliament: lies are minted, pockets are emptied, and thieves protected. " Stale knights, and captains out of service, men of long rapiers and breeches," all turn merchants when they gather in the market place of St. Paul's. It was here Falstaff bought Bardolph. We may be assured that if ever Falstaff entered a church, it was St. Paul's, and only then to wink knowingly at some acquaintance of the night or take his ease at Duke Humphrey's tomb, secure from the activities of the Lord Chief Justice and his men.

Congratulating himself that he had ventured in that haunt of roguery, and escaped without drawing forth the ridicule of some impudent loiterer, our traveller was walking in the direction of Cheapside, London's most notable shopping centre and finest highway, when he suddenly heard the dreaded cry: " Clubs! " Before he had time to think what the cry could mean, from every doorway there rushed battling 'prentices, cudgels in hand. Pedestrians looked around them with anxious fear and, in their bewilderment, stood helplessly by, whilst the crowd

of youths, now joined by a pack of adventurers with drawn swords, rushed towards the place from which the cry had come.

Knowing well what hot-heads the youths of London were supposed to be, our traveller was not disposed to follow the crowd. A panting, excited old man, observing his indecision, stepped from beneath the shadow of an overhanging gable, and explained the meaning of the *fracas*.

On the previous day a foolish gallant, boasting that he was a gentleman, had contrived to kick a 'prentice who was busily arranging the decorations for the festival. The gallant, having taken the precaution to draw his sword before he directed the kick, had obliged the 'prentice to curb his temper. But the insult was by no means forgotten. Such an incident was certain in the London of Elizabeth's time to provoke a considerable feud. That same night, so the old man said, the 'prentice, who was also the leader of a notable army of his fellows, called his men together and planned a reply. "A pestilence on all gentlemen!" they had cried. Now a hundred or so of them had attacked a group of gentlemen passing through Cheapside, and constables and shop-keepers had joined in the battle.

Only last Sunday, so the old gossip went on, a

brewer's man had killed another at Islington and on the same day there had been a murder in Whitechapel. The brick-kilns of Islington were a warren of thieves and murderers; the Queen herself, passing through the village, had been stopped and menaced by a gang of ruffians. "Know ye not," asked the old man, "that my Lord F—— was well-nigh strangled in the streets last night?" Our traveller shook his head. "Yes, my Lord, who is an unmannerly ass, struck a 'prentice with his hat. At the 'prentice's cry there assembled near a thousand people. Windows were broken, and the noble Lord and his company took refuge in a house near by, and were fortunate to escape with their lives. I would have ye know," and here the old fellow drew near to the traveller's ear and whispered, "the constables and the watch are most arrant knaves and beggarly incompetents. Most falsely do they abuse their time, sleeping on their watch, or contriving to be most busy where they know there is least occasion for their services."

During this indictment of the London watch, the rain began to fall. Beginning in a gentle summer shower, it developed into vicious thunder rain. The old man drew the traveller into the shelter of a timbered archway, from which point of vantage he saw the street transformed into a river. Water gushed

from every roof : spouts poured forth their flood like fierce fountains, and the road was quickly obliterated by the water which rushed pell mell down towards the Fleet dyke at the bottom of Ludgate. Water poured into the street from every conceivable point. The inn signs and the tradesmen's kettles and clogs all threw their share of the shower into the roadway. As there were no umbrellas, everybody wisely took to the nearest shelter. Soon the street was deserted, except for the water which now rushed angrily towards the Thames.

The storm soon passed and our traveller, anxious to see the wonders of Cheapside, was about to thank his kindly informant, when the old man began anew to deplore the restlessness and disorder of the times. " Beware the rogues of Alsatia! " said the old fellow. The traveller learned that the thieves and rascals of the town found sanctuary in Alsatia, the district lying between Fleet Street and the Thames, and that Southwark had a notorious reputation. Paris Garden, the chief landing stage on the south bank of the Thames, was often the scene of brawling and cudgel battle. Although there were five prisons on the Bankside—the King's Bench, the Marshalsea, the White Lion, the Counter and the Clink—the wrong-doers there were not checked.

London Bridge.

L. 151.

Within the city, there were prisons at Newgate, Ludgate, and Cripplegate, and a fourth at the Fleet.

The old man grew quite eloquent in his denunciation of the London rogues and his contempt of the constables. Suddenly his mood changed. "But all discord must be forgotten to-day ; see the citizens are already spreading their tables ready for the festival and pageantry."

The sun, now sinking amid a flood of orange and gold light, was lost behind the fine pointed gables of Cheapside, when the traveller and his new friend arrived therein. Every householder seemed to be in lively holiday humour. Many were vigorously cleaning the horn of their lamps or arranging new candles.

Neighbour called to neighbour ; there was much laughter. The traveller and his companion were invited to share the food and drink on the tables now lining the sides of the open street. Cheapside was an impressive thoroughfare with the shops of the goldsmiths, whose windows were rich testimonials to their magnificent craftsmanship. That day it was bedecked for the pageant. Booths were gaily festooned with ribbon ; tapestries of richest colouring were hung from the upper windows, and immense platforms were erected for the wealthier patrons.

Cheapside was London's principal street, the historic centre of all London's pageantry, where merchants and princes met to do honour to the glory of the city.

Having time, before the procession began, the traveller and his guide walked towards Newgate, where a great castle of wood and pasteboard had been erected. This castle was guarded by figures representing the Nine Worthies, of whom our traveller recognised Helen of Troy, King David, and Julius Cæsar. He was informed that the burly warrior was Henry the Eighth. Knowing something of his history, he wondered how the royal infidel had qualified for a place.

So elaborate were the devices and so carefully carpentered that the traveller asked his friend who was responsible for them. He discovered that the city pageant masters worked in the great Leaden Hall, three sides of which were reserved for the making and housing of the pageants. The painters and designers worked in the loft, and great was the skill and cunning exercised in the invention of the stage pieces.

As they made their way back to Cheapside, the shadows were lengthening and already the lamps over the doors of the shops and houses twinkled shyly. Beautiful ironwork, holding in its branches hundreds of lamps, was suspended over the doors of the

wealthier tradesmen, and flowers and arches of leaves added to the beauty of the scene.

At last the shouts of the people heralded the approach of the marching watch. Away down Cheapside could be seen a moving ribbon of lights : they were the cresset lights of the seven hundred men appointed to take part in the procession. On they came, their great lamps slung over their shoulders on long poles. Altogether there were some two thousand men : old soldiers who had won distinction ; captains, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, drummers and fife-players, standard and ensign bearers ; trumpeters on horseback ; archers in white, their bows in their hands, their sheaves by their side, proudly aware that they carried embroidered on their tunic the arms of the city ; pikemen and billmen ; morris dancers, and the constables in resplendent uniform, with scarlet cloaks and chains of gold.

Each constable was accompanied by his minstrel and cresset light. Behind the city musicians and the officers of the Lord Mayor, the sword-bearer, well mounted, in shining armour, and the footmen. Each carried a torch.

" Make way for the Lord Mayor! " cried two fine fellows in green, who carried special torches from which issued streams of sparks. Great were the

shouts when the people saw a scaly-backed dragon, a terrible creature of pasteboard and glue, which moved slowly along the highway, its great jaws opening and shutting.

Behind this fierce brute were lions, elephants, and a unicorn, so cleverly designed that nobody could see the perspiring fellow who supplied the " works."

When the last light-bearer had disappeared behind the stocks, in the direction of the Exchange and Cornhill, the bonfires were lit, and the London of Merrie England became a fairy city of light. On all sides there echoed " God be wi' you " and " You are welcome." Strangers, bidden to be merry, sat down at the benches and partook of the plentiful meat and drink arranged under the gables. Thus in laughter and friendship ended a festival day in Merrie England.

Foreigners grew lyrical in praise of London. Its palaces, green meadows, handsome trees and wide-sweeping Thames appeared to them a fit model for Paradise. They spoke of the music of the violin and hautbois as a melodious accompaniment to days of feasting. " If I contemplate that world of people of different nations who filled both the windows and streets I was persuaded at the same time that all the gods were assembled together in London," wrote a visitor.

In a few years London was to be shattered by the ravages of the fire and the plague. Its Thames-side gardens, with their lordly avenues, were to be despoiled at the hands of the builder, but when Elizabeth rode through its streets, bowing with homely grace to her people, London was a glory of temples and colour.

Much as we venerate the London of our own time, our liveliest interest is in retrospect. London is the mausoleum of the past, the tapestry on which our story is recorded. The Elizabethan's pride was tinged with no such thought.

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GALLANTS AND GAIETY

How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere.

SHAKESPEARE, *The Merchant of Venice.*

NEVER was the Englishman so fantastic in his dress as in the times that we have chosen to call Merrie England. The Englishwoman was, to our taste, a ludicrous figure in her monstrous farthingale of whalebone and wire, but the gallant also carried experiment in dress to excess. In our time we speak of Dame Fashion. In thinking of the dress

and manners of the gallant of Merrie England we must imagine Master Fashion, a silly popinjay, decreeing absurd rules, and affecting styles that to us appear childish and stupid. The fops of London strutted across their stage, quite indifferent to, nay rejoicing in the growing chorus of contempt from the more discreet citizens of the time. The Puritans lived in fear that such fantastic fashions would bring down the wrath of God ; that London would perish in a night. But the sober-sides, although there was some excuse for their indignation, were wrong. Englishmen were at last alert to the joy of life ; their horizons were extending. Proud of their strength, and confident of success, they were not afraid of boasting and swaggering. The excesses in dress and manners were but an outward confession of their good conceit of themselves.

The tailors showed as much wit in their inventions as did the dramatists in their different sphere. Fickle indeed was the taste of the gallants. They ransacked the known world for their fashion, and nothing was too silly for them, if they could only achieve novelty and notoriety. There were fops who filled their breeches with rags or bran and walked as if supported by inverted balloons. One such foolish fellow, so the story goes, whilst sitting

down slightly tore his breeches on the nail of the chair; when he got up from the chair, the bran tumbled into a heap on the floor! Not only the women, but some of the men, painted their faces! Gallants walked with great ear-rings of gold and precious stones in their ears, which occasionally they punctured to carry therein some love token from their mistresses.

We can laugh to-day, when we read the lamentations of the sober-sides. "You shall not see any so disguised as are my countrymen of England," said William Harrison. "It is a world to see the costliness and the curiosity, the excess and the vanity, the pomp and the bravery, the change and the variety, and finally, the fickleness and the folly, that is in all degrees, insomuch that nothing is more constant in England than inconstancy of attire."

"Oh!" he cried, "how much cost is bestowed nowadays upon our bodies, and how little upon our souls! How many suits of apparel hath the one, and how little furniture hath the other! How long time is wasted in decking up the first, and how little space left wherein to feed the latter! How curious, how nice also, are a number of men and women, and how hardly can the tailor please them in making it fit for their bodies! How many times must it be sent back

again to him that made it! What chafing, what fretting, what reproachful language, doth the poor workman bear away! And many times when he doth nothing to it at all, yet when it is brought home again it is very fit and handsome."

Alas! poor tailor!

It is interesting to speculate if Shakespeare, in the famous scene in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Petruchio so fiercely rails against the wretched tailor, is indebted to Harrison for the idea.

The doublets of the gallants were stuffed to swell out the chest and slashed the better to disclose the rich silk or satin lining beneath. Hats were most commonly made of velvet, with a jewelled clasp, and decorated with feathers often two feet long. But, of course, the proudest decoration of the beau of Merrie England was the ruff, which stretched out a foot from the neck, and, when newly starched, made the poor fellow's head look as though it were being served up on a platter! Both men and women dyed their hair, the gayest gallants tinting both hair and beard to match the colour of the newest doublet or cape!

Thomas Middleton, writing in 1604, has fully described a gallant for us. This young fellow's head was dressed up in white feathers, "like a shuttle-cock." His doublet was of strange cut and the collar

was so high and stiff that you might have thought it would cut his throat. His breeches were "full as deep as the middle of winter."

A French monkey carried his cloak, a magnificent affair, lined with purple velvet. His rapier was gold embossed and studded with pearls. On his wide-topped boots were huge spurs "like the forerunners of wheelbarrows."

Shoes also were slashed and of such strange shapes that the law had to step in to curb the fancy of the designer.

These gay peacocks lavished on their beards and faces the most exacting attention. Both men and women wore wigs, the fashion receiving royal warrant, for Queen Elizabeth herself had no fewer than eighty wigs at one time.

The barbers of London Bridge were members of a distinguished craft. No fine lady of our time has more care and skill lavished upon her by her hair-dresser than the seventeenth-century gallant had bestowed upon him by his barber. A foreigner, walking over London Bridge, would as he passed a fashionable barber's shop wonder at the medley of sweet scents that mingled with the none too salubrious air around him. Perhaps, too, he would catch the sound of music, for the barbers knew well that

the well-pomaded gallant was a great lover, and is not music the food of love? It was the custom for the man of fashion to while away his time in the barber's shop, where he always found a lute upon which to exercise his skill, and pay public homage in song to his mistress's eyebrows. In music, as in literature and seamanship, Merrie England led the world.

Strange indeed were the fashions in the wearing of beards. Eccentric or bizarre; fierce twists for the fainting heart, love curls for the wooer, your barber was an artist for all men of whatever mood. It was no perfunctory "Long or short, sir?" but a matter of the utmost delicacy, for the gallant expected his wig to harmonise with his doublet, and the curl of his beard with the state of his heart.

Stubbes, that indefatigable critic in the cause of sobriety, tells us that the barbers invented monstrous methods of cutting, trimming, shaving and washing. They could turn the gallant's beard according to the French fashion, the Spanish, the Dutch, or Italian. Whatever the fancy, for the brave or the mean, for the court or the country, the barber was ready to satisfy the most eccentric whim. If the gallant were sworn to fight a duel, then his beard would be

trimmed with such martial curves that his friends would acknowledge him the victor before the fight began! The most fashionable beard was the *Pique de vant*, sharp-pointed and trim.

Sometimes, says Stubbes, the mustachios were so long as to stretch from ear to ear, and then turn like two horns towards the forehead! Rose and lavender scented soaps were used; warm cloths to wipe and dry the face, and, when this ritual was over, the barber asked nothing for his trouble, but took care to keep all that was offered him. "You shall have also your orient perfumes for your nose, your fragrant waters for your face, wherewith you shall be all to besprinkled: your music again, and pleasant harmony, shall sound in your ears, and all to tickle the same with vain delight."

The toothpick was a popular mark of gentility, and the gallants made ostentatious display both of the toothpick and the fork, then a rare novelty.

Ladies, of course, were no less anxious to make the best of their looks than to-day, and no less willing to call in the aid of the chemist and *perfumier*, if Nature had been somewhat remiss. The farthingale, as we have said, was a monstrous invention, a sort of mammoth bird-cage, which made the woman of fashion resemble a female Jack-in-the-Box. In

France the law had to be called in to limit the size of these remarkable contraptions of wire and whalebone, but in England there was no such check, and in this respect the English women of fashion were greater offenders than the French.

Thomas Nashe has pictured the lady of fashion not too generously. " Just to dinner they will arise, and after dinner go to bed again, and be until supper —Yes, sometimes (by no sickness occasioned) they will be in bed three days together, provided every morning before four o'clock they have their broths and their cullises (meat broth), with pearl and gold sodden in them. If haply they break their hours and rise more early to go a banqueting, they stand practising half a day with their looking-glasses, how to pierce and to glance and look alluringly amiable."

Tobacco was suspect, nay more, it was thought by the wise men of the time to be the companion of evil, the symbol of reckless and abandoned living, the abettor of drunkenness, first cousin to crime. Poor Lady Nicotine! But there was some excuse for the ill-repute with which tobacco was received. The gallants smoked all the more heartily because the habit was frowned upon by authority. They even smoked in church! So alarmed were the sober greybeards at the growing popularity of the weed, that

no inn-keeper was allowed to sell tobacco, nor indeed to permit smoking in his tavern.

James the First, in 1604, wrote *A Counterblast to Tobacco*, a solemn appeal to men to renounce their indulgence. "How you are by this custom disabled in your goods, let the gentry of this land bear witness, some of them bestowing three, some four hundred pounds a year upon this precious stink, which I am sure might be bestowed upon many far better uses," said the royal counsellor. "Is it not both great vanity and uncleanness, that at the table, a place of respect, of cleanliness, of modesty, men should not be ashamed to sit tossing of tobacco pipes, and puffing of the smoke of tobacco one to another, making the filthy smoke and stink thereof to exhale athwart the dishes, and infect the air, when very often men that abhor it are at their repast?"

After acknowledging that tobacco had become a point of good fellowship, and that he who refused to take a pipe of tobacco amongst his friends was accounted peevish and no good company, facts which he heartily deplored, James thus concluded his diatribe: "A custom loathesome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of

'the pit that is bottomless.'" How ineffectual was the King's outburst we in our time can best realise!

Much money and temper were lost in the gaming-houses of the town. Cheating in dicing and cards was practised by an army of well-dressed men, who were to be seen in the company of the richest notables of the day. Cheaters kept well-furnished houses, and were particularly artful and cunning in capturing a country "cousin," that is an innocent fellow with his pockets filled, unaware of the sting that often lurks behind a stranger's apparent courtesy and generous hospitality.

The making of false dice was carried on in the prisons of the King's Bench and the Marshalsea, but the finest workman was said to be a Master Bird whose shop was in Holborn.

Card-sharping was no less common than cheating at dice. In sorting and shuffling, the cards were dealt so as to favour the professional cheat. By pinching the cards, turning up the corners or marking; by means of mirrors, or by signs from the lookers-on, the poor fellow from the country was generally fleeced by the cheats, and often enough he left the gaiety and warmth of the cheater's house, with the feeling that they were friendly folk, and often returned again to be similarly robbed.

But, of course, the chief pleasure, and that which granted the gallant the completest display of his latest breeches or exquisite case of toothpicks, was the playhouse.

The theatre of Merrie England happens to have provided us with the greatest imaginative literature we possess. Had not Shakespeare been of the company we should still have plenty to boast of in the exuberance and careful workmanship of Ben Jonson, the mighty lines of Marlowe, and zestful plays of the lesser dramatists of the time. The theatre was born in Merrie England, and it came to birth in the most natural way. Players as we know were classed with counterfeit rogues and thieves, as shiftless good-for-nothing fellows. But side by side with the strolling players were the distinguished company of actors, who were sheltered and protected by some aristocrat or man high in authority, such as Lord Hunsdon, the cousin of Elizabeth, and the Earl of Nottingham, the Lord Admiral.

The Queen herself was extremely fond of play-acting, so the actors were adequately protected from the spleen of the city authorities, who looked upon actors and theatres as intolerable nuisances, which attracted the worst people to their shows. But stronger than the approval of those in high places

Pagans and Puritans.

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was the spontaneous overflow of high spirits of the people of England, coupled with their long association with the colour and scenic marvels of the pageants. The Lord of Misrule, the Christmas masques, the slight but quite definite dramatic symbolism of the Morris dance, all were fused to make the glorious abandonment and richness of the Elizabethan drama.

But we are here chiefly concerned with the playhouse, where Hamlet's ghost first walked, and where the gallants, those mannequins of Merrie England, impudently swaggered. How did the theatre first come into being? It may appear difficult for us to imagine a time when there were no theatres, but before the time of Elizabeth, the Golden Age of England when the country was brimming over with vitality, there was no building which players could call their own. The inn-yard with its surrounding galleries was their usual makeshift theatre. They would wander through the countryside, halt at some important town, set up a stage in the inn-yard, play their part, and be gone.

The Christmas mummers always gave a performance in the Baron's hall. Most likely they would take their stand under the minstrel's gallery, and perhaps use the gallery itself for some scene in their crude drama.

Thus the builders of the first English theatres thought that three galleries enclosed within walls would suffice for the protection and comfort of the audience.

The galleries themselves were roofed over, but the " groundlings " sat under the sky.

In the days of their wanderings the players built the stage in the inn-yard, so the first theatre-stage also projected into the middle of the area occupied by the " groundlings," who surrounded the stage on three sides. At the back of the stage was a kind of inner stage, resembling the natural stage of the baronial hall. There was a gallery over the inner stage which could be used for a scene representing an upper window, a tower, the battlements of a castle, and so on, or, if there were no such scene demanded in the play, the gallery could be used as a box for favoured guests, or the musicians.

A small curtain was hung in front of the inner stage, but the main stage had no such advantage. The actors' dressing-rooms were behind the stage, above which was a hut, used probably for the storing of properties, and the manufacture of " noises off." From the floor of the hut an awning was stretched over the main stage, thus sheltering the actors from sun and rain.

A visit to the theatre of Merrie England was a vastly different experience from what it is to-day. The " groundlings," who stood or sat upon rushes strewn on the ground, were a lively crowd, who abused the players or cheered them, with the greatest freedom. They were critics who had no need to wait for the newspaper (even if such things had been) to tell them what they ought to think of a play. They shouted their enthusiasm or denunciation with a heartiness that often resembled a riot. No wonder Shakespeare threw in a good deal of homely fare for the " groundlings." We should probably have suffered a tremendous loss had he done otherwise, for the " groundlings " were the dictators. Had Shakespeare not thrown them something to laugh at, they, in their turn, would have thrown to such purpose, that he would probably have abandoned the profession of authorship for a calling less hazardous.

Oranges, apples, cakes and tobacco were sold in the theatres, and scraps, crumbs, and orange peel were flung about the floor, mingling with the crushed rushes and the mud. The cat-calling, jesting, and vociferous criticism caused such a din and confusion as are quite unknown to our solemn and dignified theatre audiences of to-day.

If the play or any particular actor annoyed the

"groundlings," they signified their disapproval by candid comments during the performance, and a vexed actor, in the midst of his rolling blank verse, frequently interrupted the play to return the criticism with interest. There was no such barrier between the stage and the people as exists to-day. The theatre was a confraternity of author, players and people.

But the most surprising difference of all was that for the payment of a tester (sixpence), any member of the audience could sit upon the stage itself, and three-legged stools were provided for the purpose. Of course, the gallants, those Tudor masters of self-advertisement, did not neglect the opportunity. With a corner stool, they could make some sort of impression upon the town. It was their custom, especially if they could flaunt a doublet more lavishly bejewelled or more eccentric in design than usual, to climb upon the stage just as the Prologue entered to speak the opening lines of the play. By this device they made certain of attracting the attention of the theatre, and perhaps being pointed out later in the streets of London: "See, there is Master-So-and-So, who wears a hat with a scarlet feather three feet long. I saw him at the Globe on Thursday afternoon. An arrant poltroon I warrant!" Such notoriety was the

gallant's distinction. During a performance he could ensure prominence by subjecting the play to ridicule, and with stupid by-play spoil the most sanguinary episodes or provoke laughter at the most pathetic crises. Naturally, both author and " groundlings " hated the gallant. The author was quite frankly afraid of his interference, and " groundlings " often expressed their exasperation by a well-directed over-ripe orange, or a substantial piece of turf ripped from the theatre's arena.

Thomas Dekker lashed them with fierce sarcasm in his *Gull's Horne-Book*. The essential parts of a gallant, that " insolent overweening coxcomb," were " good clothes, a proportionable leg, white hand, the Persian lock, and a tolerable beard." The gallant, by spreading himself on the stage, gained such authority in the matter of plays and their production that the poet dare not present his work unless he had previously disclosed the story and discussed the manner with him at supper in a tavern.

In his sarcastic advice to the gallant, Dekker says : " Though the scarecrows in the yard " (the " groundlings ") " hoot at you, hiss at you, spit at you, yea, throw dirt even in your teeth : 'tis most gentleman-like patience to endure all this and to laugh at the silly animals. But if the rabble with a full throat cry,

'Away with the fool!' you were worse than a madman to tarry by it."

We learn that the gallant was in the habit of laughing aloud in the most pitiable scene of the tragedy, and talking so that all the theatre could hear. Sometimes he would get up in the middle of the play, and, pulling a wry face, leave the theatre, but not before he had openly persuaded one or other of his acquaintances to follow his example. We can imagine the feelings of the wretched poet, as he watched these antics openly performed on the stage at the very climax of the play! The stupid gallant would tickle the ears of his friends to make the audience titter, respond to the most passionate speeches with fatuous cat-calls, roar loudly at the comic scenes, and whistle during the songs. The "groundlings" have also been subject to a good deal of disparaging criticism. Shakespeare, so we are led to believe, wrote all his worst lines to please the "scarecrows in the yard," but if Dekker's portrait is an accurate one, Shakespeare and his fellow poets must have felt thankful to the "groundlings" when they took the law into their own hands and soundly trounced the gallants.

The Elizabethan poet had much to bear. If in the midst of the play a thief was caught prowling among

the audience, the cry " Pickpocket! " rang round the theatre ; Othello had to pause in the smothering of Desdemona whilst the wretch was thrown out!

The stage was not provided with painted scenes, elaborately designed " wings " and set-pieces. If the scene of the play represented a battlefield, then a board was shown to the audience with the words " A Battlefield " written upon it ; if a castle, or a house, the same simple method was adopted. But we must not imagine that the presentation of a play was not most carefully considered and that brilliant costumes and clever properties were not provided. An Elizabethan crowd was familiar with cleverly made scenic tableaux and spectacular " monsters," in the pageantry and triumphs of its civic festivals : it would not be fobbed off by gimcrack stage properties in the theatres. There was, indeed, a generous outlay in stage properties, such as swords, bucklers, dragons, and pantomime effects. The actors were splendidly dressed, both on and off the stage, and neither ingenuity nor money was spared to make the play attractive to look at. Boys, we know, played the female parts, but they were accomplished actors, and looked so charming, that when actresses supplanted them there was some question as to the good sense of the innovation, and

much relief when it was found the actresses were as accomplished as the boys! The theatre was crude enough in design, but the play was the thing in those days. The playgoer used his wits and imagination. He did not need a drop scene with painted oaks and daffodils to acquaint him with the fact that the scene was laid in a forest. He could carry such pictures in his mind.

Nowadays, if we wish to recapture the spirit of the Elizabethan drama we have to return to their methods and dispense with painted forests and elaborate "sets." We have learned that the poets knew their work so well that paint and carpentry are no help but, in fact, an intrusion.

THE ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE

God Almighty first planted a garden; and indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures; it is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which buildings and palaces are but gross handyworks.

FRANCIS BACON.

THE London of Merrie England was a happy hunting ground for gardeners. Although the Queen and the civic authorities were watching with anxiety the city's growth and the rapid encroachment on the open spaces, London was surrounded with fields and woods and country lanes, and within the city were so many beautiful, well-tended gardens

that in conjuring up in our imagination the London of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century we must substitute for the modern city, with its sprawling suburbs and packed buildings, an old picturesque town with apple orchards blooming beneath the battlemented walls.

England was provided with great men for every occasion. There was Drake, the sailor; Byrd, the musician; Raleigh, the courtier; Shakespeare, the dramatist; and John Gerard, the gardener. Gerard was Lord Burleigh's gardener, and watched over the garden of Burleigh's house in the Strand. Gerard also had a large and well-stocked garden at his house in Holborn. In 1597 appeared Gerard's *Herball*, his great work on gardening, which incorporated the result of his observations in the fields of London.

The housewife of Merrie England was a skilful manager, and the homes of England were neat, clean, and fragrant with the breath of flowers. The London housewife could step into the garden where she would find, at the right season, roses and violets, herbs for the medicine chest, branches to decorate the home, and rushes to throw upon the floor.

Gerard often wandered through the city examining the plants growing in the crannies of the city walls,

picking specimens of the flowers growing on the Thames bank at Whitehall, and the wild flowers in the fields of Holborn, near Gray's Inn. London's first theatre was built in Holywell, Bishopsgate, and Gerard tells us that he frequently gathered wild flowers in the surrounding meadows. Flowers were the chief home decoration. They were cunningly arranged in the corners of the houses, and on important occasions they were strewn on the floor to make a carpet of living colour and fragrance. Gerard helps us to visualise London when he comments on the fact that the "small turnep" grew in Hackney. Gilliflowers, daffodils, narcissi, primroses, peonies, lilies, gooseberries, apples, cherries and pears; all varieties of roses, wild roses too, grew in luxurious plenty within the city walls.

The great gardens of the palaces bordering the Thames, and especially the Temple gardens and those of the Inns of Court, were cleverly laid out with flower-beds and fruit trees, and were watched over with pride and skill. If the botanist wished to pursue his researches he could walk or ride through the fields to the woods at Hampstead or Highgate, where bushes, trees, ferns and flowers grew in wild profusion.

"If you look into our gardens annexed to our

houses, how wonderfully is their beauty increased," said William Harrison. " So curious and cunning are our gardeners now, in these days, that they presume to do in manner what they list with Nature, and moderate her course in things as if they were her superiors." Strange plants, herbs, and fruits were brought to England from the Indies, America, and the Canary Isles, to the gardens of the noblemen and merchants, where they thrived so well as to be looked upon soon as native to the soil.

Harrison himself counted in one garden three or four hundred different plants borrowed from across the seas. These experiments in gardening, as he frequently pointed out, had happened in the past forty years (he was writing in 1587). The orchards were never so full of rich and diverse fruits: apples, plums, pears, walnuts, filberts, and in the nobleman's gardens, apricots, almonds, peaches, figs and corntrees, capers, oranges and lemons.

Francis Bacon, the great lawyer and philosopher, was an enthusiastic London gardener. His essay " of Gardens " expresses the poetry that lies at the heart of all true gardeners, and gives us a clue to the joy that his fellows felt in the colour and splendour and fragrance of flowers. Bacon thought

there ought to be flowers and greenery for all the months of the year, and therefore we can believe that such was the ideal he set himself in his London garden. There were holly, cypress, and yew, rosemary and lavender for winter; the crocus, "both yellow and grey," primroses, anemones and tulips for February; violets, daffodil and almond blossom for March; in April the wallflower, the lily, the peony and honeysuckle; in May and June, roses, columbine, and strawberries; and so on to the fruits of autumn.

We know also that Bacon was the true gardener-philosopher, in that he achieved the ideal between the formal garden with its well-shorn lawn and bubbling fountains and the "wild" heath with strawberries peeping beneath the sweetbriar and honeysuckle.

"And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (where it comes and goes, like the warbling of music) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight than to know what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air," wrote Francis Bacon. He then enumerates the sweet-smelling flowers, and we may well believe that he had in mind the comely housewife who loved nothing better than to spread the beauty of the garden—the

lavender, wild thyme and birch branch—about her hearth :

" Roses, damask and red, are fast flowers of their smells ; so that you may walk by a whole row of them, and find nothing of their sweetness ; yea, though it be in a morning's dew. Bays, likewise, yield no smell as they grow, rosemary little, nor sweet marjoram ; that which, above all others, yields the sweetest smell in the air, is the violet, especially the white double violet, which comes twice a year, about the middle of April, and about Bartholomew-tide. Next to that is the musk-rose ; then the strawberry-leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell ; then the flower of the vines, it is a little dust like the dust of a bent, which grows upon the cluster in the first coming forth ; then sweetbriar, then wall-flowers, which are very delightful to be set under a parlour or lower chamber window ; then pinks and gilliflowers, specially the matted pink and clove gilliflower ; then the flowers of the lime-trees ; then the honeysuckles, so they be somewhat afar off. Of bean-flowers I speak not, because they are field-flowers ; but those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are three ; that is, burnet, wild thyme, and water-mints ; therefore you are to

set whole alleys of them to have the pleasure when you walk or tread."

The Englishman was, and had been for three hundred years before the time of Queen Elizabeth, a most hospitable host. When London emerged as the Queen of English cities, and took proud precedence over all her provincial rivals, then began the decay of that large-hearted generosity which the traveller had shared and come to expect as his right. Hospitality was born and nurtured in the countryside, and London could not offer its guests the welcome the wayfarer had received in the past. But there were frequent opportunities in the life of the town for a display of the great English virtue of hospitality, and if the food was not so ample, it was, despite the grumbling of the Elizabethan chroniclers, quite as readily offered. London, however, confined its open-handedness to nights of festivals and pageantry; the country noblemen continued to welcome all who came to his threshold.

The kindly host was "dignified and honoured, wheresoever he keeps house," wrote Donald Lupton, in 1632. The hospitable host loved an open cellar, a full hall, and a busy cook. All knew his house by the smoke issuing from the chimney and "the freedom at gate." Four things he avoided, said Lupton,

and these were : London, Lent, lackeys and bailiffs. Beggars, wayfarers, tenants and servants all prayed for him. He was, in fact, a charming host, a friendly overlord, and a loyal churchman. And this critic would have us believe that " he's dead to the grief of all England ; and 'tis shrewdly suspected that he will never rise again in our climate."

Merrie England, however, found a delightful substitute for the hospitable host---the no less hospitable and capable housewife. Many were the solemn words of advice tendered to her by the men ! " Let our English housewife be a godly, constant, and religious woman, learning from the worthy preacher and her husband, those good examples which she shall with all careful diligence see exercised amongst her servants," wrote Gervase Markham, in *The English Hus-wife* (1615).

She was exhorted to be " of chaste thought, stout courage, patient, untired, watchful, diligent, witty, pleasant, constant in friendship, full of good neighbourhood, wise in discourse, but not frequent therein, sharp and quick of speech, but not bitter or talkative, secret in her affairs, comfortable in her counsels, and generally skilful in all the worthy knowledges which do belong to her vocation."

The Englishman's home is his castle, and that was

especially true of the days of Queen Elizabeth, when new and beautiful homes were being reared in all parts of the country as well as in London, where the houses of the great merchants and princes began to break down the barriers between the City and Westminster. The architecture of the time was almost entirely concerned with house-building. Only one important public building, the Royal Exchange, was built, and the great age of church-building was over.

We can still see for ourselves what the houses were like. The magnificent timbered house at Bramhall, near Stockport, is typical of the friendly " magpie " palaces so gracefully reared from the giant oaks of the woodlands. Such houses grew, as it were, from the soil on which they were built. Had the trees themselves conspired to blossom into the shape of a human habitation, they would adopt, we may imagine, some such design as the timbered homes of Merrie England.

Inside all was straight and clean. The furniture of the smaller houses was scanty enough ; one table, a few four-legged stools, and perhaps a small chair for the master of the house. But the interior of the great houses was an impressive testimony to the skill of the craftsman and the wealth of fancy and inven-

tion that went to the making of homes. The great houses of the time were models of the home beautiful. They were also symbols of the prestige and power that England had won in the eyes of the world. The squires had no need to build moats about their houses or enter by means of a drawbridge. Instead, they could sit in the sun-patterned recess made by the oriel windows and look down an avenue of noble trees bordering a terraced lawn.

Most magnificent of all the decorations of the Elizabethan mansion was the noble oak staircase, with its steps of solid oak, its richly carved balustrades and heraldic figures, dominating the newel posts. Above was the ceiling, cunningly ornamented with elaborate pendant patterns in high relief, and the splendour of the effect was increased by the carved wainscoting which lined the walls. The staircase led from the great hall to the great chamber.

If a guest from the England of to-day could, by some trick of magic, travel back through four centuries, and spend a day as the guest of a nobleman, he would be surprised at the care and attention lavished upon him, that his visit might be pleasant and comfortable.

If he arrived at midday, he would probably find the household at dinner, for this meal began at eleven

o'clock and continued until, perhaps, one in the afternoon. Our imaginary visitor would recognise the elaborate carvings of the Tudor carpenters, but the fact that the oak was new, and therefore not dark with the stain of time, would come as a slight shock to him. The master of the house, on greeting his strange visitor, would naturally show him through the house and certainly grow more enthusiastic in explaining the beauty of the "gallery," the most extraordinary feature of the great houses of the time, and which to us appears quite a needless extravagance.

The "gallery" was sometimes more than two hundred feet long and was used for dancing and promenading, but was primarily intended to display to advantage the owner's newly painted pictures, most brilliant tapestries and household treasures. If the family possessed a massive, high-backed chair, of which they were unusually proud, it would quite likely rest beside one of the window-seats, in the long gallery, where it would share the honour with, say, a beautiful cabinet of inlaid mahogany, and a linen chest of carved oak. While the gallery may have appeared to the visitor to be an expensive medium for the display of half-a-dozen family portraits, he would stand in rapturous delight at the colour

and splendour of the general effect. The square-paned windows, bearing the arms of the house in stained glass, would break the oblique rays of the sun, whose long, golden pointers would throw into relief the glowing shades of the freshly wrought tapestry, with its vigorous outline and decorative pattern of, perhaps, the "Defeat of the Armada." The bright oak panelling, the different tints of the inlaid wood of the furniture, as well as the gay ostentation of the costumes of the host and his family, would produce, in the mind of the visitor, a sudden admiration for the brave days when Englishmen were not afraid of the glories of colour and craftsmanship.

Our visitor, if he arrived when the principal meal of the day was over, would, of course, be invited to share supper at half past five. Being, let us hope, a tactful and gracious guest, he would not press his host too closely for details of the manner of living, but remain content to learn from his own observation.

Supper was a much more informal meal than dinner, but the guest would be impressed by the close attention to detail, and the scrupulous care with which differences of rank were marked. The master of the house would certainly occupy the high-backed chair. Perhaps in this household there would be three such

chairs, in which event the wife would take the second, and the guest would be beckoned with solemn courtesy (for no little honour was shown him by such preferment) to seat himself in the third. The rest of the household, children, retainers, and the less distinguished guests would use stools, and our visitor would not be slow to recognise that the host and those immediately about him, were separated by a very profound social barrier from those who sat further down the long table.

It is doubtful whether padded upholstery was known in the time of Queen Elizabeth, but the stiff-backed oak chairs would be made more comfortable by cushions, which were also placed in the window seats.

Supper over, the guest, now thoroughly ashamed of his drab, though handsomely tailored suit, and wishing that his host would lend him a ruff to cover his funereal tie, would be invited to play a game of skittles on the terrace or be shown through the beautiful grounds.

In Merrie England it was early to bed and early to rise, and the twentieth-century wanderer, familiar perhaps with pictures or museum specimens of the famous four-poster beds, would contemplate, not without misgiving, the prospect of a night in an

Elizabethan house. On being shown to his room by the manservant (there were so many bedrooms in the house that he would never have reached it alone), he would recognise the great bed with its heavy curtains and solid decorated oaken posts, and admire the tapestried walls.

The room would contain, besides the huge dominating four-poster, an oak chest, and perhaps a chest of drawers, with a silver basin, handsomely chased, for washing, and a hand mirror, or, less probably, a stand looking-glass. While the servant was placing the warming-pan in the bed, and drawing a wooden bath tub in front of the great fire cheerfully crackling in the wide-mouthed fireplace, the visitor, glancing at the four-poster, would see at once that there were two or three feather beds for his comfort, and that the quilt was magnificently embroidered. Such a bed, in the coin of the twentieth century, would cost at least one thousand pounds.

Meanwhile, from the bath would come the aroma of sweetly perfumed soap, and the visitor would realise that "Merrie England" was anything but the hard, comfortless place he had imagined.

The guest's refreshing "tub" over, the servant would draw from under the four-poster his own low trundle bed, and, as the visitor sank into the lavender-

scented sheets, the curtains would be pulled about him to shield him from the draughts. As he heard the servant settling himself into his bed at the foot of the four-poster, the guest would sink into sleep, until he was gently roused at five o'clock in the morning.

Breakfast, which was served at half-past five, was not the substantial meal it is in our time. "Those that journey and some sickly men sitting at home, may perhaps take a small breakfast, yet in general the English eat but two meals," wrote Fynes Moryson, in his *Itinerary* (1617). The two meals were dinner and supper. "Our tables are oftentimes more plentifully garnished than those of other nations," wrote Harrison, and indeed there was no day but what the nobleman would expect to see on the tables not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, coney, capon, pig, or as many of these as the season would permit, but also red or fallow deer, a great variety of fish and wild-fowl, and sundry other delicacies.

The food was served in silver dishes, and when the nobleman and his family had taken what they needed, the remainder was sent to the inferior members of the household further down the table. When all within had eaten, the food was distributed among

the poor who assembled round the gateways, knowing well that their turn would come.

Drink was served in silver bowls or fine Venetian glasses. "It is true," wrote Fynes Moryson, "that the English prepare largely for ordinary diet for themselves and their friends coming by chance, and at feasts for invited friends are so excessive in the number of dishes, as the table is not thought well furnished, except they stand one upon another. Neither use they to set drink on the table, for which no room is left, but the cups and glasses are served-in upon a side table, drink being offered to none till they call for it."

The London merchants were no less generous with their fare than the nobleman of the countryside. They had, beside the ordinary dishes, coloured jellies, moulded so as to represent flowers, beasts, and fish; marzipan curiously shaped, and tarts of all colours and kinds; jams of home and foreign fruit; sweetmeats, gingerbread, and all kinds of sugared confectionery. It must not be thought with all this heavy splendour that the Elizabethan nobleman, or merchant, was a gourmand. During meals there was no loud jesting and the diner was careful not to be guilty of drunkenness, or the equally detested misdemeanour of over-eating. The friends

of the rich were as welcome the day they went away as the day they arrived. London, however, was not so generous, for we are told that travellers complained sometimes of the difference between the largess of the countryside and the frugal greeting of the city. Where, in the country, they would be rewarded with healthy helpings of beef, mutton or chicken, in London it was " a cup of wine, or beer, with a napkin to wipe their lips, and a ' You are welcome.' "

In the larger houses there was a quite remarkable difference of degree in the ranks of the serving-men ; from the stately Gentleman-usher who attended the nobleman himself, down to the lowest menial, the turn-spit, who was often actually a beggar, brought in from the roadside to perform this lowly office.

The servants' duties at table are recorded by Hugh Rhodes in his *Book of Nurture*, 1568, who gives us an illuminating picture of the solemn ritual of dinner. The servant was to take a towel about his neck, a cupboard cloth, a basin and a ewer, cover the table and set the salt, bread and trenchers. Napkins and spoons were to be set on the cupboard ready, and each man received trencher, napkin and spoon. The fork which was generally used in Italy was becoming increasingly popular in England. Great care was taken to observe subtle differences of rank, and the

carver and his subordinates made obeisances before the men of high rank whenever they stepped forward to take away the dishes, or hand a favoured guest a glass of wine.

Elizabethans washed before and after meals. When, towards the close of the meal, the fruit and cheese were cleared from the table, and the ale and wine replaced in the oak cupboard, the servant would carefully wipe the crumbs from the table and, with a solemn bow to the master of the house, the salt, that symbol of rank, would be removed. The table cleared, the servant would spread a clean towel on the table-cloth in front of the nobleman. A basin would be set down, and filled with water from the pitcher.

The assurances of contemporary chroniclers that the people did not eat too much may have been genuine, but the persistence with which they repeated these assurances suggested that they were forestalling criticism. Certainly it was a general custom to eat more in those days than we are accustomed to in ours. Life was more strenuous, work and play more physically exacting, and such robust recreations as were common needed substantial support. "Eat, drink and be merry," however, was not the spirit in which the meals of England were

partaken of. The saying savours too much of grossness, a quality which characterised John Bull at a later date than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when meal-times were conducted with scrupulous care and dignity.

The Elizabethan was proud of his home. To-day we flatter Merrie England by building "Tudor" mansions with mock timbers, gables, and oriels.

It is strange that she who looked upon herself as the mother of the nation, and who expressed in herself so much of the genius of the time, was no home builder. Queen Elizabeth was never so happy as when she was setting out on a journey.

GLORIANA

In her days every man shall eat in safety
Under his own vine what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.
SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VIII.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH was worshipped by her people. She was equal to the task of government and leadership at a time when England was in the full vigour of its youth. It was fitting that the courage, the high-spirited zeal, the gallantry and the poetry of England should be quickened in the service of this Queen, who devoted her life to the cause of winning the people's love and of making her

country conscious of its unity and strength. In her time, England reached the zenith of its power. The pioneers, whether poets or pirates, were content to lay their treasures at the feet of Elizabeth, whom the poets christened "Gloriana," and who has come down to us as "Good Queen Bess."

Some historians tell us that Elizabeth was vain, heartless, quick-tempered, cunning, and strangely aloof. We are told, on the one hand, that she loved nobody and nobody loved her, that she suffered from the isolation she chose, and the fact that throughout her life she never knew the warmth and joy that comes with family cares and troubles. On the other hand, that poets laid tributes at her feet: that men of wit and courage scrambled for a place in her regard (if they did not lose their hearts they sometimes lost their heads), and that, during her restless travels through her land, villagers crowded to look upon her as though she were something more than human. She ruled over the country for forty-four years, and by her womanly common sense, manly independence, and downright methods, she made possible a peace which laid the foundation of the country's greatness.

Her courtiers were afraid of her. They had good reason to be, for at the very outset of her reign she

had made it dramatically clear that she would not brook interference with her royal prerogative. She may have boxed a courtier's ear, but we must remember that she sought to build her kingdom on the homage of the common people, and this she accomplished. When she rode to Tilbury on the night her troops took ship to face the Spanish Armada, it was a gesture to which there was a magnificent response. When she said that the people of the land were her children, it was no mere trick of statesmanship : she meant it, and it was her burning sincerity for the good of the people that has made her name glorious. She was indeed every inch a Queen, and with all her dancing, her hard swearing, and her hard riding, her strong ale and highly coloured wigs, she was worthy to represent the people of Merrie England. And it must be remembered that her life was begun in loneliness, that very early she was introduced to intrigue, lived and reigned amid the evil whisperings, the rancour and envy, of sycophancy and place-hunting. Through it all she kept her head, because she was wedded to her kingdom.

When Queen Elizabeth set out on one of her many travels it was an event in the lives of the people, for she dearly loved display and pageantry. She was accompanied on long journeys by six hundred two-

wheeled wagons, each drawn by six horses, and stacks of boxes contained her extensive wardrobe. This remarkable procession, lumbering along the highways of England, would form a spectacle of the kind certain to rouse the country folk to enthusiasm. Wherever she went she met with abundant proof of the loyalty and devotion of her people. Her visits to the great country houses were made the occasion for lavish entertainments.

Queen Elizabeth's reign was accompanied by a series of "progresses" from one great house to another. Open-air tournaments were devised, and large sums of money were spent upon these pantomime displays. Nobles and courtiers vied with each other in the ingenuity and costliness of these spectacular performances. From a description of the more striking pageants, we can gain a vivid impression of the general love of display which characterised England.

These royal "progresses" were more than a queen's recreation. As her immense equipage rolled over the countryside, the Queen delighted in seeing and being seen by her people. She was astute enough to recognise that her popularity would be increased the more she travelled. Often these adventures would be marked by some unpremeditated incident.

Some country fellow would push his way up to the Queen's carriage, and, eyes alight with patriotic fervour, would protest his devotion to her. The Queen liked nothing better. She encouraged such friendly liberties. Was she not the mother of her people?

Perhaps the nobles who were to pay for the privilege of entertaining Her Majesty were often greatly relieved when they saw her carriage disappearing over the hill on its way back to Greenwich or Whitehall. For entertaining the Queen was not an unmixed pleasure. In the first place, it was an expensive business. Elizabeth was not content with modest efforts, and so exacting was she, and so keen became the competition between the courtiers, that the creation of pageants and masques grew into a profession which had its masters and craftsmen. Historians have hinted that Elizabeth was quite aware of the practical side of such travels. If she spent six months in travelling from castle to castle, she was living at the expense of somebody else, and her life-long love of show and pageantry was being catered for with magnificent generosity. Cares of state may have exhausted her. It was necessary to combat the jealousies, intrigues, and enmities of those about her, but when her temper, never very

A Royal Pilgrimage.

N. 198.

tine and flowers of gold. In the six boats which attended the royal barge were the princess's retinue of ladies, beautifully dressed in russet damask and blue embroidered satin. These ladies wore upon their heads tall hats of silver cloth decorated with green feathers.

Arriving at Richmond, this charming argosy was met by the Queen, who conducted the princess and her ladies to a pavilion, set up in a labyrinth of the garden, and designed in cloth of gold and purple velvet, to represent a castle. The sides of this pavilion were ornamented with fleurs-de-lys in silver and pomegranates in gold.

During the magnificent banquet which followed the reception, an imitation pomegranate tree, probably made of marzipan and intended as a tribute to Spain, was served.

Elizabeth began her reign amid the rejoicing of the whole nation. It is doubtful if a man could have won and kept such affection as was showered upon this far-seeing woman. It was the age of chivalry, and whatever may have been the Queen's personal beauty, it was sufficient to inspire the poets to eulogies, which did not appear ridiculous to her contemporaries. Her fascination and wit served her as the head mistress of a school of gallants and

courtiers, who were quite willing to spend their lives in the accomplishments demanded of them. If they were pretty fellows, it was well ; if they were learned and sagacious besides, so much the better ; they were content to win her praise.

At the death of her sister, Mary, there was no question as to her successor. " God save Queen Elizabeth! " were the sentiments of the whole people. London bells were set a-ringing, and, true to their custom, when night fell bonfires were soon blazing, and the citizens spread their tables in the streets. When Elizabeth first entered London as Queen of England the streets were strewn with fine gravel, and minstrels lined the processional route, which was thronged with cheering people. Elizabeth, dressed in purple velvet, and preceded by the heralds and officers, rode through the cheering ranks of the citizens to the Tower. She bowed gracefully to right and left. Never was a Queen more enthusiastically welcomed.

The coronation ceremony was attended by a feasting and pageantry of unparalleled splendour. Magnificently embroidered tapestries were hung from the chamber windows of the rich merchants. The journey from Whitehall to the Tower was, of course, by river, which was lined with the gilded and richly

carved barges of the noblemen and city companies, whose oarsmen were gaily caparisoned in suits decorated with crests and badges. The Lord Mayor's company, the mercers, made a great show. Their barge carried artillery, which fired shots into the air. Minstrels played.

On January 14th, 1559, the Queen passed through the city back to Westminster. We are told, in Aikin's *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth*, that Elizabeth was carried in "a sumptuous chariot." Trumpeters and heralds headed the gallant procession. The nobility of the land accompanied the Queen. Ladies on horseback were dressed in crimson velvet. The citizens made their appeal in a series of elaborate and solemn pageants. These pageants were wooden erections, each of which bore texts in Latin and English, and represented in symbol the earnest pleadings of London for the wise government of the land. As the Queen passed each pageant, a child stepped forth and explained the meaning of the display. In one, three storeys high, there were living figures representing Henry VII and his queen, Elizabeth of York; Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and Her Majesty herself. The tableaux carried verses expressing the hope that peace would accompany the reign of the Queen. Another showed virtue triumphing over vice,

a third the eight Beatitudes, and a fourth the contrasted effects of evil and wise government, under which image was represented the mouth of a cave; from this cave, old man Time led forth his daughter Truth, who held a Bible. As the Queen approached this living allegory, Truth stepped forward and handed the Bible to the Queen, who, amidst the prayers of her people, clasped the Book to her heart and kissed it reverently. This, said the Queen, was the greatest gift of all. However, when she passed along Cheapside, lined with the ranks of the gaily dressed City companies, she was met by the Recorder of London and handed a purse containing a thousand gold marks. We are told she received it "with both hands," and answered the Recorder's oration "marvellous pithily." Both Bible and purse were acceptable gifts, especially the purse.

Gog and Magog, London's friendly watchmen, had stepped down from their pedestals in the Guildhall to guard the entrance to the city at Temple Bar, where they supported a huge scroll, on which was written an account of the meaning of the various spectacles and pageants the Queen had seen. Before she passed from the City which had welcomed her so generously, Elizabeth thanked the citizens for their tributes, assured them of her devotion to them

and England, and so passed on to Westminster amid the echoes of London's cheers. A branch of rosemary had been handed to her by a poor woman at Fleetbridge. It was found in the royal carriage when the Queen arrived at Whitehall.

Soon after her accession the Queen ordered the London companies to muster their men-at-arms in the park adjoining the palace at Greenwich. Fourteen hundred men assembled, eight hundred carrying the long Moorish pike, two hundred halberdiers, and the musketeers in shirts of mail. This review, which was but another testimony to the loyalty of her people, was followed by feats of arms performed by her gentlemen pensioners, who were the pick of the nobility of the land. For this display she had built a banqueting hall, made of fir poles and bedecked with birch branches, roses, lavender, marigolds and rushes.

The first of the famous royal progresses was from London to Dartford in Kent, thence to Cobham Hall, where she was splendidly entertained by William, Lord Cobham ; she then moved on to Eltham, and finally to Nonsuch, the stately palace which was built by her father on a site now lost near Ewell, Surrey. This massive and imposing house was considered one of the architectural masterpieces of the

day. Its turrets commanded fine stretches of the Surrey hills, its wooden upper walls were ornamented with statues and scenes, moulded in low relief. Here the Earl of Arundel arranged banquets, masques, and a play by the most famous of the London companies. On her departure the Queen was presented with a fine collection of plate, which, no doubt, she received also " with both hands."

In the summer of 1575 the Queen visited the castle of Kenilworth, the home of her favourite, the Earl of Leicester. He could not afford to be outshone by any of his contemporaries in the splendour of the reception, and this visit was made the occasion for the most grandiose of displays. A temporary bridge, seventy feet long, was built across the valley to the main gateway of the castle. As the Queen's party drew near the castle, it was welcomed by a Sibyl and six figures eight feet high, representing trumpeters. Behind the figures, which were set up on the castle walls, stood real trumpeters. When the Queen reached the castle gates, the porter, dressed to impersonate Hercules, made a gallant speech and handed the castle keys to Her Majesty. Entering the outer court, the Queen was greeted by a girl representing the Lady of the Lake. This Lady, who moved slowly across the water, was attended by two

water nymphs, and she also made a speech when she came near to the Queen. The Royal procession, which then moved on towards the inner court, passed over the bridge whose pillars were decorated with fruits in silver bowls, beautiful vessels holding red and white wine, fishes of all kinds, weapons, musical instruments, and birds fluttering in cages. Music was played as the Queen stepped down to enter the castle.

There was a special entertainment arranged for each day of the visit. Firework displays, interludes, dancing and bear-baiting were varied by such sports, held in the castle-yard, as running at the quintain, and special players were sent from Coventry to perform the "Old Coventry Play of Hock Thursday."

In one of the spectacular displays held on the water in the castle court, Harry Goldingham, a man with a fine singing voice, was chosen to represent Arion riding upon a dolphin. The scene was carefully prepared, and the Queen and her courtiers duly assembled. The dolphin, which was twenty-four feet long, and which had six musicians hidden within it, sailed majestically into the picture, but when the time came for Arion to lift his voice to the heavens in song, the unfortunate actor discovered that his voice failed him. At last, overcome with confusion and

shame, the man tore off his trappings and loudly declared he was not Arion at all, but " honest Harry Goldingham." The Queen, we are told, was delighted by this hitch in the proceedings.

An Italian acrobat was part of the entertainment : thirteen bears were baited during the visit, three stag hunts were arranged, and there were banquets, masques and plays within the castle.

It is amusing to note that when she visited Norwich, then distinguished for its woollen manufactures, after the mayor had delivered himself of his long and loyal address he handed to the Queen a large cup filled to the brim with pieces of gold ; the Queen made no pretence of concealing her eagerness, but snatched off the lid of the cup and, in a loud whisper to the footman to whom it was handed, said : " Look to it, there is a hundred pound! "

Norwich was at great pains to do justice to the Queen's love of colour and pantomime. Wooden erections, symbolising the woollen trade, were erected in the streets, and Her Majesty was awakened in the morning by Mercury, who, in a blue satin, gold-lined cloak, with wings at his back and feet, from beneath her window invited her to step down into his gilded coach and see the masque, in which Venus and Cupid, Wantonness and Riot, were vanquished by the God-

dess of Chastity. Nymphs and fairies lay hidden in the hedgerows in order to dance out and surprise her as she passed.

Perhaps the most lavish and ridiculous display was that given by the Earl of Hertford, reputed to be the wealthiest man in the kingdom. The Queen stayed four days at Elvetham, in Hampshire. Here the accommodation was quite inadequate to the Queen and her circus, so temporary wooden palaces were erected. A large pond was built and three floating islands were launched. One island carried a structure representing a fortress, another a ship, and the third a mountain. When the Queen came to watch the show, the water was troubled with sea-gods, swimming, wading, blowing trumpets, or reciting verses to her gracious majesty. This Arcadian treat was concluded with a battle between the pond-gods and an opposing army from the woods. Darts and squirts were the weapons.

It would be as absurd as unfair to suggest that Queen Elizabeth's time was mainly occupied by such festivities. She watched over the affairs of state with a zeal and prudence which were and are a magnificent testimony to her shrewdness and capacity. She might, of course, slap her wisest counsellor and call him a "froward old fool," but

on his death she retired into the privacy of her own room and wept.

She had the good fortune to be served by men whose loyalty, devotion, and wisdom were never in question. She listened to them, was guided by them, but never forced into a decision against her will. She was extremely jealous of her crown, and she was shrewd enough and brave enough to wear it with honour.

Nothing is more remarkable in her reign than the extraordinary manner in which she exploited her sex to the advantage of her country. It was quite evident that she had early made up her mind not to marry. But she trifled with the mighty King of Spain, and tricked her rivals in Scotland and France with an exasperating contradictoriness that was altogether feminine. Many suitors came to her court "to be looked at," but as she had already gathered about her the most handsome young men of England for the same purpose, they were sent home without much hope. With all her cunning and shifty methods, she was considered, even by her enemies, to be "the most glorious and fortunate of all women who ever wore a crown."

An excellent and vivid picture of life in the court of Queen Elizabeth is given us by Hentzner, the

observant German traveller. Rich tapestry covered the walls of the Queen's presence chamber, the floor of which was strewn with hay. Hentzner saw the Queen pass from her apartment on her way to prayers. She was preceded by the barons, earls, knights of the Garter, all sumptuously dressed, and the Lord High Chancellor, who, holding the seals in a red silk purse, was attended on each side by a servant, one holding the royal sceptre, the other the sword of state, whose red scabbard was studded with golden fleurs-de-lys.

The Queen, who was in her sixty-fifth year, was still "very majestic." Her face was oblong and wrinkled, her eyes small, but black and pleasant, her nose hooked, lips narrow, and teeth black. On the top of her auburn wig was a small gold Crown. She wore a necklace of jewels, and a collar of gold and jewels. Her gown of white silk, which was bordered with pearls as big as beans, was covered by a mantle of black silk threaded with silver. Her long train was carried by a marchioness.

She moved with stately grace and spoke first to one and then to another of the kneeling courtiers. Whatever the language of the minister, French, Italian, Spanish, or Dutch, she could speak it with skill, or, if need be, Greek or Latin.

The Queen's dinner was the occasion of a solemn ritual which Hentzner described in detail. Firstly, there entered the chamber two men, one carrying a rod and the other a tablecloth. Both knelt three times. The tablecloth was spread, and after further kneeling the gentlemen retired, to return with further obeisances, the salt-cellar, plate and bread. At this point in the impressive ceremony two ladies of the court entered. One, a countess, bowed low three times, and then rubbed the plates with bread and salt, all of which was performed with as much solemn dignity as though the Queen herself were present.

After a short interval of waiting, trumpets and kettle-drums began to sound, then one hundred handsome yeomen of the guard, in scarlet tunics, brought in the courses, each of which consisted of twenty-four dishes. Before the Queen could be allowed to dine, the lady-taster handed to each of the yeomen some of the food he had brought, to ensure that none of the food was poisoned. The grave ceremony concluded, young ladies-in-waiting solemnly carried the dishes into the inner chamber where the Queen, with one or two attendants, sat and supped alone.

Queen Elizabeth was no fairy queen of romance.

She was indeed liberally endowed with that peculiarly feminine sense which laughs at phantoms and demands sound judgment, quick decisions, and bold policies. She was, above all, practical. If she presided over her country with the watchfulness of a mother, she commanded her Court with the strict discipline of a somewhat truculent school ma'am. But with her death we must ring down the curtain on that epoch in our country's history which we have labelled " Merrie England."

What justification have we for investing an age with a glamour which, after all, may be but the illusion of passing years? Is it not the old fallacy of " The good old days "? The past acquires a romance which may ludicrously belie the facts. Certainly the Elizabethans themselves were not conscious that they were contributing to a legend: they looked back regretfully to the colour and romance of the Middle Ages and sighed for the good times gone.

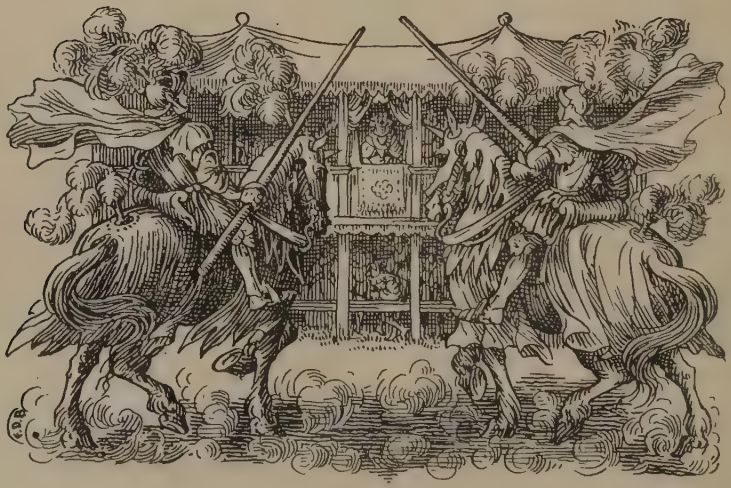
Historians mildly condemn the attitude of mind which persists in labelling vague periods as the time of Merrie England: they look askance at glib phrases which may so easily mean nothing. " The spacious days of Good Queen Bess! " says the popular lecturer, but does not stop to talk of the

woeful neglect and ignorance which was so soon to be punished in the horrible suffering of the Plagues and the Great Fire. But it is none the less true that the England of Shakespeare, of Drake, and of Elizabeth herself was indeed a time when the country's genius reached maturity. It was the age of achievement. We are pursuing no phantom when we agree that if any period of England is to be called " Merrie," that age shall be the age of Elizabeth.

Shakespeare may have been a happy accident, but it is not easy to believe that those great tributes to England's greenwood, *As You Like It, The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Winter's Tale*, could have been written in any other age. Shakespeare has captured the healthy laughter, the buoyant light-heartedness, the variety and vigour of the English countryside. The poetry that lingers in the cool shades of Arcady is nearer to the England of Elizabeth's time than to our own. There is no need to twist the facts, nor to resort to special pleading, to prove that in those days England was more robust, more fertile in fancy and invention, nearer to the springs whence the imagination is refreshed, than in ours.

There are periods in the life of a nation when it is strong, alert, and fecund. Egypt, Greece, and Rome have each contributed much to the world's store of

learning and discovery. England's genius was strangely allied to the poetry of her fields and hedgerows : there is a gusto and prodigality in her greatest artistic work which is shared by Nature at her happiest and freshest. In the days of Merrie England laughter was abroad in all the land.



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